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THE LAST MILE
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THE LAST MILE

THE LAST MILE

A Play in Three Acts

BY

JOHN WEXLEY

PREFACE BY LEWIS E. LAWES

WARDEN OF SING SING PRISON

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1930

SAMUEL FRENCH

Thos. R. Edwards Managing Director
NEW YORK LOS ANGELES

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1930

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TO THE MEMORY OF
MY BROTHER HARRY

PREFACE

I have seen one hundred and thirty men pay the penalty of death imposed by law. In groups of twelve for each execution, a total of fifteen hundred and fifty-nine men and one woman, witnessed the executions to attest the legality of procedure. Ninety to ninety-five percent of these witnesses left the execution chamber convinced of the utter futility of capital punishment. Some of them are to-day among the most convinced abolitionists.

Several months ago the scene was set for an execution. Witnesses, assembled in my office, had been instructed as to their parts, and were waiting for the final word to proceed to the death house. The telephone rang. I picked up the receiver. In the tense moments that followed, I found myself talking with the Governor, who had just granted a respite pending further investigation.

Now the twelve men assembled had come prepared to witness an execution. Apparently, they were steeled for the event, some merely morbid, others coldly curious. Yet when I announced the Governor's decision there was unmistakable relief. One witness, a prominent merchant, hard-headed and practical-minded, was beside himself with joy. Instead of grim witnesses of death, the group became a happy, even hilarious company of life.

John Wexley's audiences are not so fortunate. "The Last Mile" carries them relentlessly through the final

moments of hopeless living—to death. Men often see death in close approach. On the battlefield, soldiers hobnob with him in unconcerned familiarity; in hospitals, in our homes, death takes his daily, even momentary toll—it is his due. “Men are born to die,” is a truism handed down through the ages, since life began.

What is there in this death—John Wexley’s portrayal,—that grips the emotions, and sends us home overwhelmed with mortification?

“The Last Mile” may be a drama or a tragedy, depending on the viewpoint of the reader or audience. To me it is an epic. It is more than the story of prison or condemned. The men within those barred cells upon the stage, crushed physically, mentally and spiritually, between unrelenting forces of man-made law and man-fixed death,—are they not the victims of man’s imperfect conventions upon which he has erected a social structure of doubtful security?

Not the death march, or the droning motor—the instrument of death; not ravings of the maniac, or the blusters and foul mouthings of the condemned awaiting their destiny, or even the riot scene with all its gun play and vengeful fury—gripping as they are—are the really telling parts of the play. More important is the subconscious urge to know why such things should be.

“The Last Mile,” christened by Wexley while treading the death walk to “back in,” the execution chamber at Sing Sing, is provocative.

What is society’s responsibility for ever increasing murders? What shall be done with the murderer?

John Wexley gives no answer. He presents the stark, naked facts. We must find the solution. “Murder on the heels of murder” is not that solution. Perhaps, in a re-

generated, better planned social order that will seek causation rather than punishment, "The Last Mile" may be transformed into a "first mile" on the road to rehabilitation.

LEWIS E. LAWES

Sing Sing Prison,
Ossining, New York.
April 18, 1930.

"THE LAST MILE," was first produced by Herman Shumlin on February 13, 1930, at the Sam H. Harris Theatre in New York City. The play was directed by Chester Erskin, the settings were designed by Henry Dreyfuss, and the cast was as follows:

FRED MAYOR (Cell 3).....	<i>Howard Phillips</i>
RICHARD WALTERS (Cell 7).....	<i>James Bell</i>
"RED" KIRBY (Cell 9).....	<i>Hale Norcross</i>
VINCENT JACKSON (Cell 13).....	<i>Ernest Whitman</i>
EDDIE WERNER (Cell 11).....	<i>George Leach</i>
DRAKE (Guard).....	<i>Don Costello</i>
JOHN MEARS (Cell 5).....	<i>Spencer Tracy</i>
O'FLAHERTY (Guard).....	<i>Herbert Heywood</i>
PEDDIE (Guard).....	<i>Orville Harris</i>
PRINCIPAL KEEPER CALLAHAN.....	<i>Ralph Theadore</i>
HARRIS (Guard).....	<i>Richard Abbott</i>
TOM D'AMORO (Cell 1).....	<i>Joseph Spurin-Calleia</i>
FATHER O'CONNORS.....	<i>Henry O'Neill</i>
EVANGELIST.....	<i>Clarence Chase</i>
FROST } (Reporters)	<i>Allen Jenkins</i>
BROOKS }	<i>Albert West</i>

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

The scene is the death-house of the Keystone State Penitentiary at Keystone, Oklahoma.

ACT I

Late May. It is evening.

ACT II

Two weeks later. It is late afternoon.

ACT III

Six hours later. It is night.

DESCRIPTION OF CHARACTERS

CELL 1: TOM D'AMORO: About 26, tough, dapper, curly hair, short, dark, Italian-American.

CELL 3: FRED MAYOR: About 23, dirty blond hair; hot-tempered, nervous, intelligent, cruel, handsome. Perhaps some women would call him sweet at times.

CELL 5: JOHN MEARS (sometimes called Killer): He is of the type that deserves the name. Hard as nails. Medium height, wiry, hard eyes, narrow mouth. Illiterate but intelligent. Dominant. Clean shaven. Brown hair. Irregular nose. About 32.

CELL 7: RICHARD WALTERS: About 25. Tall, slender. Good-looking. Has lots of guts. Religious. Conventional. Good sense of humor, but can be real mean too. Blue eyed type. Fair, intelligent.

CELL 9: "RED" KIRBY: About 45. Now that he is getting older he is getting religion after a sort. A real bandit with years of experience. Prefers to do things rationally, not on impulse. Sensitive. Of medium height.

CELL 11: EDDIE WERNER: About 40. He has become mad here in the death-house while awaiting execution. He is being held for a visit from the State Lunacy Commission. During the interim he has been given a stay. He is or was the most educated and intelligent of the condemned convicts. Thin, emaciated, ascetic, gray, bony. Tall and rather harmless in his insanity. The poem of the first act is recited with the impression that it is his own

DESCRIPTION OF CHARACTERS

composition ; that perhaps he is still adding lines and words. The second and third poems spring forth from him as from a little novelty jar that plays a tune when it is lifted or opened. The name that he repeats throughout the play makes one think that it is an appeal of some kind. What? Mercy? Love? Perhaps a conglomeration of everything that man longs for is contained in the lunatic Werner's appeal of "Holmes."

CELL 13: VINCENT JACKSON (called "Sunny"): About 29. Southern Negro, coal-black, gigantic in stature. Superstitious. Deep bass voice. Religious.

GUARDS:

O'FLAHERTY: About 52. Irish born. Good, generous. Fatherly.

DRAKE: About 28. Cruel. Mean. Vicious. Handsome, clean cut American.

PEDDIE: Everything that Drake is to a lesser degree. About 27. Timid.

HARRIS: About 33. Like Drake when younger, time has eased him up a little.

PRINCIPAL KEEPER, FRANK CALLAHAN: About 43. Stout, heavy Irish, cunning, mean.

FATHER JAMES O'CONNORS: About 35. Tall, well-built. Religious.

EVANGELIST: About 34. Rural farmer type. Tries to be very masculine and metropolitan. Uses Billy Sunday style.

FROST }
BROOKS } Reporters.

All convicts' uniforms consist of black shoes, gray socks, gray trousers, gray shirts with collars open.

"The Last Mile" was suggested by a short published sketch by Robert Blake, to whom the author acknowledges indebtedness.

ACT ONE

ACT ONE

Scene: The death-house of a state penitentiary. A tier of cells numbering from stage-left—to right: 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13. The audience is really supposed to be witnessing the action from the even numbered cells opposite. Therefore between the audience and the odd numbered cells is a corridor. At one end of this, stage-right, is a steel door leading to the offices and to the outside. Stage-left is another door of steel, painted green, opening into the electrocution chamber. The death-house is a one story structure and through the cell windows that can be seen through the bars of the cell doors, the audience sees some distance away, the sky.

Time: The time is about nine o'clock, two hours before the hour set for RICHARD WALTERS' execution. The month is early May. The air is charged with a tenseness, the condemned convicts speak very strangely, very nervously. One of them is to be electrocuted in only two hours.

At the door Right is the GUARD, DRAKE, seated. Cell I is vacant. After the rise of the curtain there is a slight pause.

The Curtain rises slowly.

MAYOR

Nine o'clock, Walters.

WALTERS

How do you know?

MAYOR

Just heard the whistle blow.

WALTERS (*musings*)

Funny. I didn't hear it. You got good ears, Three.

MAYOR (*bitterly*)

Sure I got good ears. Nothin' to do but listen, is there?

WALTERS (*repeats dully*)

Nothin' to do but listen. (*Slight pause.*) Well, fellers, this is my last coupla hours.

KIRBY (*encouragingly*)

You'll get that stay yet, Seven.

WALTERS (*quietly*)

Too late now . . . Red.

KIRBY

The Governor gave a couple last week. No reason why you shouldn't get one.

JACKSON

You'll get it, white boy. You'll get it, jest yuh keep right on prayin'—

WALTERS

I'm prayin' for it, but it's no use. It looks like I ain't being heard at all, Thirteen.

JACKSON (*plaintively*)

Don't be callin' me Thirteen. How many times have ah asked yuh not to call me Thirteen. Ain't it bad enough bein' Thirteen without havin' to be called it?

KIRBY

Sure, it's bad enough.

WERNER (*in a loud wailing voice, idiotically*)

Hol———mes!

WALTERS

Well I don't expect that stay, or I'd have gotten it when the Governor gave it to Nine.

KIRBY

It'll come at the last minute, Seven. Just wait. He's refused to commute your sentence, but if you had the priest wire him he might stop the execution to-night and have you examined by the Lunacy Commission.

WALTERS

I did that, Red.

KIRBY

Well . . . ?

WALTERS

Well . . .

[*Slight pause.*

When does the priest come?

MAYOR

He comes whenever you write him or send him a telegram.

WALTERS (*smiling dismally*)

Maybe I ought to start yellin' Holmes.

HARRIS

Supper for Number Seven.

DRAKE

O.K.

MAYOR

Too late now. You shoulda done that long ago. (*A noise off-stage left.*) Here comes supper.

WALTERS

It better be a good one. It's my last I guess.

KIRBY

Oh, I dunno. You'll get that stay. It's early yet.

JACKSON

What did youah ohder, Seven?

[*A GUARD opens the door, delivers the tray to DRAKE and exits.*]

WALTERS

I ordered a tenderloin steak, baked potatoes, fruit cock-tail, jam, bread and lots of butter, coffee and mushroom soup.

[*GUARD gives him food through aperture.*]

JACKSON (*meditating*)

That oughta be plenty.

WALTERS

Yea, I guess I'll be gettin' good and hungry on my way down.

JACKSON

Ah can't figgah how yo' came to think of that theah mushroom soup. (*Scratches his head.*) But ah doan't think ah could eat if ah was you.

WALTERS (*testily*)

Aw, shut up. I got the chance to eat to-night, what I want and all I can, and I'm goin' to. I'm sorry I didn't order fried turkey and a lot of side-dishes.

KIRBY

They'll give you anything you ask for.

MAYOR (*sarcastically*)

Yeah. Any reasonable request you make now will not be refused you.

JACKSON (*persisting*)

Where do you think they got that theah mushroom soup from? Is it canned soup?

WALTERS (*eating*)

I dunno. It tastes too good to tell.

JACKSON

Ah wish ah had some.

WALTERS

You'll have it, Thirteen. You'll have all you want.

JACKSON

Please woan't yuh stop callin' me Thirteen? How many times . . . ?

WALTERS

I'll stop. (*ceases to eat suddenly.*)

I'm feeling sick. I don't think I can finish this all.

[*A VOICE off-stage left.*

VOICE

Give these cigars to Number Seven.

DRAKE (*takes them, shuts the door and crosses to Seven*)

Some cigars for you, Seven.

WALTERS

Thanks. Who sent 'em?

[*While smelling them.*

DRAKE (*grouchily*)

I dunno. Somebody they wouldn't let in to see ya.

WALTERS (*very curious*)

But what's the name? Didn't ya get the name?

DRAKE

No, I didn't. I didn't ask.

WALTERS (*angry*)

Well, why didn't ya? Didn't ya think a guy might wanna know?

DRAKE

Cause I didn't wanna. That's why. (*Meanly.*) Whatsa-matter? Don't ya want the ceegars?

WALTERS (*suddenly letting down*)

Sure I do. But I wanted to know who sent 'em. Give

me a light . . . will ya? (*DRAKE lights one for him; Condemned convicts are not permitted to carry matches, although they may smoke.*) Say, I'll never be able to smoke all these.

MAYOR

I'll smoke 'em for ya, Dick. Send 'em down.

WALTERS

Ya want 'em all, ya hog. Take some, Mears. (*Passes some to MEARS who takes a few and passes the rest to MAYOR.*) Say! Fred Mayor! I'm gonna ask them to let me hold your hand to-night.

[*Laughs.*]

MAYOR (*laughing*)

The hell they will.

WALTERS (*still laughing at what appears to him a great joke*)

Sure, they will, and you'll get the juice through you and we'll go to hell together.

[*EVERYBODY lets out a great laugh.*]

MAYOR (*laughs a little, then*)

Aw, Seven, cut it out. Hey Screw, give us a light. I'm goin' in a couple of weeks. Ain't that bad enough? (*DRAKE does so, sullenly.*) Some ceegar. How do you like the service here, boys? (*DRAKE glares at him angrily, the match still burning in his hand.*) All right, James, that'll do. (*Blows match.*) Now bring the Cadillac roadster.

[*The MEN laugh with abandon. Great joke, even though they've heard it again and again.*]

WERNER (*recites suddenly in a ghastly tone*)

The death-house's where they come and go,
They linger just a little time
Before they give you the electric chair,
Sentenced for some awful crime.

WALTERS

Oh, he's begun again. Stop it, Eddie.

MEARS (*shooting his words like rifle shots*)

Shut up, you crazy bastard!

WERNER (*going on, unminding*)

I have seen them come, I have seen them go,
I have heard the death-warrants read,
And when I see the bright lights go dim,
In the 'lectric chair, another guy is dead.

WALTERS (*holding his hands to his ears*)

Fer Christ's sakes, Eddie. Have a heart.

WERNER (*undaunted, scarcely pausing*)

When I hear the lonesome hum of the motor
That sends the high voltage to your chest,
I have a sad unexplainable sensation
Running through my breast.

WALTERS (*screaming savagely*)

I'm gonna come back and haunt you, like a ghost, if
ya don't shut up!

WERNER (*not even hearing him*)

When your time grows near . . . less than one hour,
And you get that reprieve of a *little* more rest.

KIRBY (*approval*)

Now you're talkin' sense.

WERNER (*continuing*)

Why do they pull that black cap over your face,
And let it remain until you are dead?

Why? Because the high voltage of electricity
Will make your eyes pop out of your head!

WALTERS (*shrieking*)

God, God, I'll go mad. Stop him . . . somebody!

MEARS

Drake! Why the hell don't you stop him?

DRAKE

Stop him yerself. I like it.

MEARS (*contemptuously*)

Bitch!

WERNER (*continuing*)

When I'm speaking of the Midnight Special . . .

DRAKE (*menacingly*)

I'll bitch you . . .

WERNER (*continuing*)

You probably don't understand what I mean . . .

MEARS (*with withering contempt*)

Ya yellor screw. Come on, flatfoot.

DRAKE (*changing his mind and reseating himself*)

Aw, pipe down.

WALTERS (*pleading, piteously*)

Eleven. Cut it out. Will ya please?

WERNER (*not pausing*)

When the warden tightens the helmet
And places the sponge upon your head,
Then pulls the lever of injustice,
In one minute . . . you are dead . . .

(Pause)

Hol———mes!

WALTERS (*exhausted*)

Christ!

[*Bell rings. O'FLAHERTY, another GUARD, enters.*]

O'FLAHERTY (*perfunctorily*)

How is it?

DRAKE

Quiet.

O'FLAHERTY

O.K.

[O'FLAHERTY *lets* DRAKE *out then crosses to* WALTERS.
How you feel, Walters?

WALTERS

All right, O'Flaherty, all right.

O'FLAHERTY

That's good. Better try an' take a nap. Through eat-
ing? I'll save the coffee in case you want it later on,

WALTERS

All right.

[The lights suddenly grow dim, then brighten again.]

JACKSON (*savage, African, barbaric*)

Heya, Heya . . . Theah're testin' the Midnight
Special for Number Seven!

WALTERS

Jesus!

WERNER

And when I see the bright lights grow dim,
In the 'lectric chair another soul is dead.
Look at those lights go dim!

MEARS (*between his teeth, with suppressed rage*)

They're playin' with that thing again. Why do they
have to play with it? They're playin' with it all the
goddam day. Do they think we got no nerves?

MAYOR

We got more nerves than anybody else.

JACKSON

We're the most nervous people in the world.

WALTERS (*shouting to those behind the green door*)

Hey, you goddam monkeys, get the hell out! Jeez.
Ain't it bad enough? Cut it out. Christ, that makes
me sick.

MAYOR

I can't stand so much of this. I'd rather be anywhere than here.

JACKSON

That talk foh me too.

WALTERS

That got me in the gut. It made a funny sensation then. Kind of burnin' like. . . .

KIRBY

It'll get worse, kid. I know. Wait'll it begins to tighten up real like a vise. (*Very slight pause.*) Fellers, it's no joke. I'd like to be some place else now.

MAYOR

You'd have been some place else if you hadn't gotten that stay.

KIRBY (*sighing*)

Huh! How well I know it. But honest, I hate like hell to be in here when a man is goin' to burn.

MEARS (*quietly*)

You think you're the only one? You're lucky, Red. You got a smart Jew lawyer. You'll get some more stays maybe, and see a coupla more get the works.

[PRINCIPAL KEEPER FRANK CALLAHAN and GUARDS PEDDIE and HARRIS, enter with TOM D'AMORO, a young Italian-American. HARRIS unlocks Cell One. D'AMORO pauses in the cell door frame. He places his hands on the jams and examines the interior with

a feigned criticism. HARRIS and PEDDIE stand near him.

PEDDIE

Come on. . . . move in. .

JACKSON

Say, Mister Callahan, didn't yuh promise me Num-bah One cell?

CALLAHAN (*with O'FLAHERTY*)

What? Oh, you? Don't you see how busy I am? This is no time to bother me.

JACKSON

But yuh . . . promised me.

CALLAHAN (*interrupting*)

Didn't you understand me? I'm too busy now.

HARRIS (*to D'AMORO*)

All right. This is yours. Come on. Get in.

D'AMORO

What's your hurry? I got plenty time. (*He reaches up as high as he can, with his hands on the jambs, then on his toes.*) So this is the ice-box. (*And he spits with gusto at the ceiling of the cell.*)

PEDDIE (*as he slams door*)

Use your handkerchief, wop!

JACKSON (*stubbornly*)

But yuh did promise me.

CALLAHAN (*as he is leaving*)

I'll put you in Number Seven later.

JACKSON (*sadly, slowly*)

I won't be able to sleep in Seven. Gee, Boss. What's this pore nigger done to yuh?

[CALLAHAN *exits*.]

JACKSON

Say, fellers, how come they don't let us in them cells 'cross the way? How come?

MAYOR

So we don't see each other, Sunny. So we'll be more alone, so . . .

MEARS (*interrupting, to D'AMORO*)

What's yer name, One?

D'AMORO

Tom D'Amoro.

MEARS (*taking in his breath, causing a whistle*)

Oh, so you're the dago that croaked that cop.

D'AMORO (*with some bravado*)

Yea, I'm the guy.

MEARS

My name is Mears, Cell Five.

MAYOR

Fred Mayor, Cell Three.'

JACKSON

Vincent Jackson, in the *last* cell.

KIRBY

Red Kirby, Cell Nine.

D'AMORO

Pleased to meet you fellers. Who's goin' to burn to-night?

WALTERS (*suddenly hysterical*)

Number Seven, Seven is gonna burn . . . Richard Walters!

WERNER

Hol———mes!

D'AMORO

What the hell is that?

MAYOR

That's Ed Werner, Cell Eleven. He's gone nuts, so the Governor gave him a stay.

D'AMORO

Well, why don't they take him the hell out of here?

MEARS

They don't take him out. They leave him here, so that he can drive us all nuts.

MAYOR (*explaining*)

They've got to keep him here for the Lunacy Commission. The regular doctors here can't touch him. Then the Commission makes its report direct to the Governor. Sometimes it takes three or four weeks to get a nut out.

KIRBY

He's a poet too. He'll drive you mad. But just don't listen to him, One.

WALTERS (*after a slight silence*)

You're right about that chair makin' your stomach turn over, Red.

KIRBY

Lordy . . . don't I know! (*Slight pause.*) Gonna tell the reporters anything, Seven?

WALTERS

They're expectin' me to tell 'em the whole story to-night. They're crazy. It wouldn't do me a damn bit of good! What good can it do me!

MAYOR

Seven, keep everybody out but the state witnesses. Don't let the rubbernecks in. I wouldn't if I were you.

WALTERS (*with forced bravado*)

Aw, I don't care who sees it. (*impulsively*)

Say! Who am I gonna give this money to? (*Silence.*)

Well, say somethin', you damn guys.

JACKSON

Send dat money on down here, Boss, if it's botherin' yuh.

WALTERS (*passing it to KIRBY who passes it on*)

It's only a coupla dollars. Say, Red, do you remember when you sent me everything you had, money and all, when you were gettin' ready to go . . . and the

Governor gave you the stay and I had to give you everything back again? I sure did cuss.

KIRBY

Yeah! Sure I remember.

JACKSON (*lightly—cheerily*)

I'll send yuh everything back to-morrow mornin',
Seven.

WALTERS

All right, Sunny. Say, Three, do you want these cigarettes? I got four packs.

MAYOR

Keep 'em, Seven. You can smoke 'em to-morrow.

WALTERS (*fervently*)

God, I hope so.

MEARS (*extending his hand*)

Gimme a pack, Seven, I'm all run out.

[WALTERS *does so*.

WALTERS

What time is it, somebody?

MEARS

It's early, it's about half-past.

WALTERS (*getting excited*)

Half-past what?

KIRBY (*consoling*)

Nine, Kid, only half-past nine. You'll have that stay yet. See if you don't.

WERNER (*wailing*)

Hol———mes!

D'AMORO

What's that guy yellin'?

[*Pause.*

WERNER

Hol———mes!

D'AMORO

Hey, Guard, why the hell don't you stop him? That sounds like the name of the cop I croaked. His name was Holman. Sol Holman.

O'FLAHERTY

Shut up, Werner.

D'AMORO (*without pausing*)

I couldn't help killin' him. He shot at me on the roof and it was either me or him. Now what could I do? If a guy is pumpin' lead at you and you hear the bulls and dicks blowin' their whistles down below in the streets and people shoutin', and ya got a gun, why ya just shoot back. Ya can't help it. Ya gotta shoot back. . . . ya gotta. . . .

MEARS

Take it easy, One.

D'AMORO

Jesus!

JACKSON (*singing*)

It ain't what yuh eat
Is gonna make yuh fat,

It's what yuh reap sweetheart.

It ain't what yuh sow

Is gonna make you weep,

It's what . . .

[*Bell.*

KIRBY (*to WALTERS, quietly*)

Say, Seven, here's the warden's brother-in-law, with what looks like a telegram,—maybe it's a stay.

CALLAHAN (*crosses to WALTERS and shows him the telegram, which the convict reads*)

WALTERS (*as he finishes, suddenly*)

Hell, no! (*Steps to rear of cell, then returns and repeats.*) Tell 'em I said, Hell, no!

CALLAHAN

Who are you yelling at?

WALTERS

You, you! Tell 'em I said Hell, no!

CALLAHAN (*as he exits*)

That's what the Governor said for you, too.

WALTERS (*very short pause, then shouting after him*)

Huh? What d'ya say? Did ya hear what he said, fellers? Didn't ya hear? Why don't you guys answer, dammit? Answer me, somebody, for Christ's sake!

KIRBY

Don't listen to him, Seven. He's just that way.

JACKSON

He's a mean skunk jest like the warden. He's lookin' foh to frighten you. That's all.

WALTERS

Huh! Did youse hear what I told him? Hell, no! That was a telegram from the sheriff of some damn county wantin' to know if he and some friend of his, a justice of the peace, could get my permission to come and see the electrocution. Say, if they get me sore I won't let anyone in that the state gives me choice of keeping out.

MAYOR

Don't let 'em in!

D'AMORO

Keep 'em out, Seven!

WALTERS

Ya heard me tell him what to say, didn't ya?

MAYOR

Sure we heard. (*Slight pause.*) Which reporters you lettin' in, Seven?

WALTERS

I don't know.

MAYOR

Let in the boys from the *Post* and the *News* if they come. They're good fellows.

WALTERS

Yea, they're not so bad, I think.

MAYOR

They've treated us pretty white.

WALTERS

Ya see, the warden explained everything to me last week. He gave me to understand that there would be five witnesses for the state, and besides that, the guards. And that I could have any five I wanted for my own witnesses, but if I didn't want anybody for my witnesses I could keep 'em out, and only have the state's.

[*Bell.*

O'FLAHERTY

Howdo, Father?

O'CONNORS

How do you do, boys? (*GUARD opens Cell Seven, PRIEST enters.*) Well, how do you feel, Walters?

WALTERS

All right.

O'CONNORS

That's the spirit, boy. Are you ready for me now?

WALTERS

Yes. I finished reading the prayers. (*Points to prayer book.*) Up to here.

O'CONNORS

That's right. (*Points to script and places stole on his shoulders.*) Now read that, Walters.

WALTERS (*reading*)

I confess to Almighty God, to Blessed Mary ever

Virgin . . . to Blessed Michael the Archangel . . . to Blessed John the Baptist, to the Holy Apostles, Peter and Paul, and to all the saints, and to you, Father, that I have sinned exceedingly in thought, word and deed, through my fault, through my fault, through my own grievous fault.

O'CONNORS

Sancti. Amen. Now, Walters, you believe in God?

WALTERS

I do, Father.

O'CONNORS

In His only Son, Our Lord . . .

MAYOR (*contemptuously*)

Huh!

MEARS

Shh. . . . Keep quiet.

O'CONNORS (*continuing*)

Forgiveness of sin through the resurrection of the body, and Life everlasting?

WALTERS

I do, Father.

O'CONNORS

Taken the name of God in vain?

WALTERS

I have.

O'CONNORS

Committed robbery or adultery?

WALTERS (*Emphatically*)

No, never, Father, never. .

O'CONNORS

Procured, desired or hastened the death of anyone?

WALTERS

Huh? What's that? What did you say?

O'CONNORS

Procured, desired or hastened the death of anyone?
(WALTERS *is still.*) Well, have you?

WALTERS

I have, Father, but I didn't mean it. Honest! I didn't.
It was all an accident. So help me Jesus. So help
me. . . .

[*He commences to sob quietly but convulsively.*]

O'CONNORS (*places his hand on his shoulder consolingly*)

God is merciful, Walters, to those who have faith.
Say a good act of contrition.

WALTERS (*pointing to page*)

Here?

O'CONNORS

Yes, begin here.

WALTERS (*reads*)

O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended
Thee, and I detest all my sins, because I dread the

loss of Heaven and the pains of Hell, but most of all because they offend Thee, my God, who art all, good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve, with the help of Thy grace, to confess my sins, to do penance, and to amend my life. Amen.

O'CONNORS (*as WALTERS reads*)

Dominus noster Jesus Christus te absolvat; et ego, auctoritate ipsius, te absolvat (*In decreasing tones*) ab omni vinculo excommunicationis, et interdisti, in quantum possum, et tu indigues. DEINDE ego te absolve a peccatis tuis, in nomine Patris et Filli, et Spiritus. Amen. All right. God bless you. I'll see you later, Walters. (*Exits cell, speaks to MAYOR.*) Well, boy, how are you feeling?

[WALTERS *sits on his stool and reads prayers.*]

MAYOR

Swell.

O'CONNORS

I've been praying for him. I think his soul is at peace.

MAYOR (*sarcastically*)

Yeah!

O'CONNORS (*unmindful*)

It is not possible for me to save his life or body. The Governor has refused to grant a stay. I'm coming back presently to give him Holy Communion. I'll stay with him then to the end. It will calm him and bring him nearer to God and Jesus. I always walk to the chair with the man I prepare for death and

administer the last rites to. It helps them to go without fear.

MAYOR (*interrupting*)

All right. All right. I've got two weeks yet. Do I have to go through this a million times?

O'CONNORS (*smiling benignly*)

I'll speak to you again to-night when I come back.
[*As he crosses right.*]

MAYOR

Don't bother.

O'CONNORS (*walking past MAYOR stops by MEARS . . . then quietly*)

That boy in there is hopeless.

MEARS (*wearily*)

Uh-huh.

O'CONNORS

Yes. (*In another tone.*) You look fatigued—John.
You ought to go to bed.

MEARS

No. I don't want no sleep.

O'CONNORS

You need it.

MEARS

I don't need nothing.

O'CONNORS

Why, you haven't slept for nights.

MEARS

Well—what's the difference? (*Suddenly.*) Why the hell don't you leave me alone, O'Connors?

O'CONNORS

I'm sorry. I was only trying—

MEARS (*interrupting*)

I can't sleep, don't you see? I don't see him but I know what he looks like—I know what he's going through in there—

O'CONNORS

He's taking it like a man—

MEARS

The hell he is. Aw you're like the rest of 'em. (*Slowly.*) He's scared stiff, in there.

O'CONNORS

It seems to me he's very brave.

MEARS

Brave? Why—how the hell is he brave if I'm afraid to pukin'? How is he feeling if my belly is turning over with the idea?

O'CONNORS

He has faith.—John, he believes. I wish you would allow me to talk to you too—about God—about . . .

MEARS

Listen here, O'Connors—I look at you and I can't make you out. You look like a fellow that's read books and always kept your eyes open. You talk like a

three years old. You want me to believe—in what? In another world? So that I shouldn't fear to go on the week of the ninth? Eh? All right. What kind of a place is this next world of yours? What's in it? Did anyone ever see it? Where's your proof that it exists?

O'CONNORS (*silent for an instant, conscious of his impotence to answer*)

I hoped you wouldn't talk that way, John—I—

MEARS

Well—what do you want then? You want me to take it all in, on your word? Who the hell are you?

[*Slight pause.*]

O'CONNORS

Why don't you let me—?

MEARS

Aw crap!

O'CONNORS

You won't understand—

MEARS

Well—then make me understand!

O'CONNORS

You've got to have faith—in the Lord, and believe in His Son—the Christ—He promised—He died.

MEARS

That ain't faith. That's just closing your eyes and wishing. Say—I've been through too much. Maybe I never went to school. Maybe I never had no education,

but I've thought a lot in my time. I had to, and I know this: I got to see it on black and white, I got to have two and two make four. I ain't talkin' myself into nothing. Say, don't you think I'd like to believe and so not be afraid of that in there— (*Gestures to door on right*) not have to wait and worry and wait—and go nice and peaceful, and smiling and have faith? Why sure—you can talk that way—you don't have to go—you're not waiting—afraid—afraid—

O'CONNORS

I would have no fear.

MEARS

You wouldn't?—

O'CONNORS

I'm certain I wouldn't.

[*Two GUARDS enter, one of whom is also a barber. They unlock WALTERS' cell. O'FLAHERTY still remains at the door right. O'CONNORS nods to MEARS and exits.*]

DRAKE

Come out, Seven.

WALTERS

What for? It ain't time.

DRAKE

You're gonna be shaved. Open up, O'Flaherty.

WALTERS (*exits from cell into corridor. His hands hold a few oranges, a pipe, and a book*)

Here are some oranges I don't want. Can I give them to the boys?

O'FLAHERTY

Sure.

[WALTERS distributes them to the various cells, while the guard PEDDIE arranges his shaving materials and DRAKE follows WALTERS about.]

MEARS (*taking an orange*)

Say, Seven!

WALTERS

What?

MEARS

Stay with 'em.

WALTERS

I will, don't you worry. I'll be waitin' for you in hell on the fifteenth.

MAYOR (*as WALTERS gives him oranges and book*)

Keep it up, Walters. It's better for all of us if you do. Ya see, if you go strong and don't break, why we're just ashamed, see, so—

WALTERS (*laughs*)

Huh! It's a cinch.

DRAKE

Come on, come on. (*He sits down and PEDDIE shaves him.*) What about his head, Peddie?

WALTERS

Say, nothin' doin'. I don't want my mother to pass out lookin' at me when I get home—

PEDDIE

The warden said all right; we don't have to do it to him, cause he spoke to Seven already.

DRAKE

All right, Seven, you're crazy, not me. But don't say later that I didn't warn you. You'll get twice as many shots of juice this way, cause the hair'll be in the way and should be shaved off.

[*Kneels and begins to slit WALTERS' right trouser-leg.*]

WALTERS (*laconically*)

This is my funeral, not yours. (*Slight pause.*) I'll run it the way I like. Say, Sunny, sing somethin', will you?

JACKSON

What do you want to hear, Boss?

WALTERS

Any damn thing, so long as it's a song. (*The GUARDS commence to wash him.*) Oh, boy, I'm gettin' to feel all tightened up. I'm gonna give up hope. What time you got there on your wrist, Guard?

PEDDIE (*looking at his wrist-watch*)

Ten o'clock.

WALTERS

Ten o'clock?

[*PEDDIE is now shaving his leg.*]

PEDDIE

Yea, just.

WALTERS (*whistles*)

Whoogie, my time is gettin' short. Why in hell don't you sing, Sunny?

WERNER

Hol———mes!

WALTERS

They're gonna fix that chair up for you right away, Thirteen.

JACKSON

No they ain't, Mister. Don't you be givin' me no jinx blues jest because I cain't sing now.

WALTERS

I'll be waitin' down below for you, Sunny.

[*A GUARD enters Cell Seven, and removes blanket, chair and pillow. WALTERS is then locked up in his bare cell. The GUARDS now exit and only O'FLAHERTY is left. Pause.*]

I'm sick in my stomach.

KIRBY

Take an orange. It'll do you good.

WALTERS

It ain't that, Red. You see, I just hate to go. I didn't know I hated anything so bad in all my life. I hate to leave you guys.

KIRBY

This old life isn't any good anyway, Kid. Let's just hope you're goin' to a better one. Maybe there

is a better place somewhere. There oughta be.
[O'FLAHERTY *blows his nose suddenly.*

WALTERS (*mumbling to himself*)

What if I shouldn't get that stay? What—?

JACKSON

Keep standin' up, Boss.

MAYOR (*together with JACKSON*)

Don't let it get you, Walters.

WALTERS

What if I shouldn't get that stay, Red?

KIRBY (*consolingly*)

You'll get it—Seven.

WALTERS (*a bit faster*)

But what if I shouldn't?

KIRBY

But you will.

WALTERS (*louder and faster*)

But what if I shouldn't? What if I shouldn't?

KIRBY

I got one, and why should you be an exception?

WALTERS (*still louder*)

But what if I shouldn't? (*Hysterically.*) What if I shouldn't?—

[*Leaps to his feet and clutches bars insanely.*

MEARS

Stay there, Seven.

WALTERS (*speaks staccato, in jerks*)

Well—just keep by me—you damn guys, keep stickin' by me. I'll build me an air-castle—or somethin', to get my mind off it, off the chair. Hey, tell us how you slit his throat, Sunny. Tell us how you ripped up that high yaller.

JACKSON

Lemme 'lone, white boy. Ah'm busy prayin' for you.

WALTERS

Thanks. Keep it up. I'll pray for you later on. Wish I had a drink.

O'FLAHERTY (*advances and offers him a pint-flask from his hip*)

It's against the rules ; but take a slug o' this, Kid.

MEARS (*as WALTERS drinks*)

Watch it!

[O'FLAHERTY takes flask and returns to door. He then opens to show GUARD and EVANGELIST.

GUARD (*crosses to Seven*)

Right here, sir. This is the fellow who goes to-night.

EVANGELIST (*advances to Seven*)

I sure am glad to know you, my son!

WALTERS (*quickly*)

Who are you?

EVANGELIST

A friend of God, the same as you. (*Effusively.*) When I read of your impending execution, I just had to come and see you, and find out for the peace of my soul if you were saved in God's own true way, if you were ready to embrace the faith—

WALTERS (*dully*)

Yes, I'm ready, but I'm still hoping till the last second that my life will be spared—

EVANGELIST

I'm very grateful to hear that you are ready to die in God's way, standing upright, and not as a heathen sinner—

MAYOR (*interrupting derisively*)

How does a sinner die, preacher? On his behind?

EVANGELIST (*turning to MAYOR truculently*)

What are you? A wise guy? Think you know it all? Don't you? Maybe that's why you're here, wise guy.

MAYOR (*making quite an expressive gesture, though rather vulgar*)

Aw, can that stuff, Aimee MacPherson. Don't think you can make us believe you're a man by using slang.

EVANGELIST (*returning to WALTERS, comments*)

Wise guy!

WALTERS (*simply*)

Well, I certainly am glad I'm not leaving a wife and kids. I'm glad I never married. I'm glad now.

EVANGELIST

Yes, it is easier, brother, where there is no one concerned but yourself.

WALTERS

Not so much easier. (*Slight pause.*) I hate to leave Mother. It hurts her, I know.

EVANGELIST

It will be ever so much easier for her to bear, knowing that when her son went the way of all flesh, he was all right with God; that all his accounts were settled with our Friend up above, that his—

MAYOR (*shouting*)

Oh, Jeez. Get the hell out of here. Do I have to stand for all that crap too? Hey, screw! Get this bastard out. Screw!

GUARD

All right. Let's go.
[*They exit.*]

EVANGELIST (*to WALTERS, as he leaves*)

Good-bye. Meet Him with a smile.

WALTERS

Yea! Good-bye. (GUARD *enters with coffee for Seven. As he drinks, GUARD exits.*) Red, you were damned lucky to get that thirty-five day stay. Boy, I wish I had one. Looks like I ought to get one stay at least. Just one.

KIRBY (*sincerely*)

Seven, if it was possible for me to do it, I'd give you

half of mine, and we'd both have seventeen and a half days each. I wish I could do it.

WALTERS (*with intensity*)

You wouldn't fool me, would you, Red? This ain't no time to do that.

KIRBY (*emphatically*)

Not right here in town with my shirt on. Of course I got no way to prove my statement to you. I can see why you find it hard to believe; but just the same, I would do it. I would. I wish it was only possible, because I hate like hell to see you go, Seven.

WALTERS

I wish you could do it, Red. If you ain't kiddin' me?

MAYOR

He ain't. He'd do it. I believe him.

WALTERS (*Finding it very difficult to believe*)

Ya all think so, guys?

D'AMORO (*slowly*)

Seven, we all think he means what he says.

WALTERS (*extremely thankful*)

Well, (*breathing deeply*) thanks a lot, Red.

[FATHER O'CONNORS *enters*. O'FLAHERTY *unlocks cell Number Seven*. O'CONNORS *enters cell—places candles etc. on stool*.

MAYOR

Say, One. Did you say your name was (*saying it carefully*) D'Amoro?

D'AMORO

Sure, that's my name. Why?

MAYOR

Nothin'. Only your name D'Amoro sounds like a French word I know. *Amour*. It means—love.

D'AMORO

Same in Italian. Love.

MAYOR (*wistfully*)

Hm. Love.

D'AMORO

Say, ain't that a funny word to say in this place and at this time?

MAYOR

Funny is right.

[*Slight pause, during which the PRIEST'S voice is heard murmuring. Then—*

O'CONNORS

Open up, Guard.

O'FLAHERTY

Yes, Father.

[*Does so.*

O'CONNORS

I'll be back.

[*Exits.*

MAYOR

What would ya say, One, if I told you that I was in love?

D'AMORO

Right now?

MAYOR

Right now.

D'AMORO

No kiddin'. Who with?

MAYOR

With a girl. What d'ya think? A fag?

D'AMORO

That's funny. What does she look like . . . ?

WALTERS (*As he interrupts, they stop conversing*)

Light me a cigarette, Five. I'm afraid my head'll catch on fire with all this alcohol on it, if I get near a match.

O'FLAHERTY (*takes cigarette from MEARS who has lighted it and gives it to WALTERS*)

KIRBY (*with some conviction*)

Seven, there must be somethin' for you to look forward to. It must be better than this life or it wouldn't be worth much. I don't think any of us is losin' much when we walk to that chair. Anyhow there's bound to be a heaven or somethin', and if there is somethin' or somebody like a God, everybody'll have the opportunity to get in right.

[*Bell rings—DRAKE enters with TWO REPORTERS and conducts them to Cell Seven.*]

BROOKS

Hello—Walters.

WALTERS

Hello, fellers.

FROST

How do you feel?

WALTERS

Pretty well. Thanks.

BROOKS (*trying to put it delicately*)

Feel like givin' us a little information?

WALTERS (*suspiciously*)

Where ya from?

FROST

I'm from the *Post*. Brooks here is on the *News*. But he's all right.

MEARS

They're O.K., Seven.

BROOKS

How do, Killer?

MEARS

All right, Slim. O.K.

WALTERS (*slowly, undecided*)

Yea, maybe I'll tell ya somethin'. I don't know, but, (REPORTERS *pay close attention*) she wasn't no kid, like the D. A. said she was. She was over sixteen. You seen her pictures. (*Pause.*) I was makin' pretty good money. I was workin' then for the town gas company, as a meter-reader. I loved her—

FROST

You did? (WALTERS *nods.*) You really loved her?

WALTERS (*slowly*)

Yes, I did. I was crazy over her, I guess. I'd been pretty wild, ya see, and I liked her, so much, I guess, because she was so, so—clean, a virgin, and very pretty.

FROST

Then what?

WALTERS (*slight pause, as he speaks, he now and then wets his lips*)

Well—I wanted to marry her—I asked her, ya might not believe me, but I did. I'd have done everything for her, but she kidded me and teased me along, and I—I couldn't sleep nights. I wanted her so. Well, that day I took her ridin', you won't believe me, but it's true—true as God. I took her ridin' to elope with her. She asked me where I was goin'. I said, 'Just ridin'.' And she says, 'It's time to go back,' and I laugh and say, 'Sure, Ethel, sure. We'll go back, and how.' Well, she gets nervous. Ya see, she didn't give me much credit for honest intentions, and that was what— (*Catches himself*) well, I'll come to that, and here she is gettin' nervous— So I see she's gotta know and I drive into a side road, and park under a tree near a little brook. Well very slow-like I take out the diamond engagement ring I had bought for her, and I tell her to shut her eyes. She does. I slip the ring on her finger, now get this, cause, you woulda done the same, I take and I kiss her hand

with the ring on it. She opens her eyes and looks at me for a second, then she looks at her hand and says softly—‘Oh’—Then I kiss her on the mouth, and it was the first time, and—It was—wonderful. It was a nice clear day, near about sunset. She lets me kiss her, but suddenly she begins to squirm and yell, ‘No, no. I don’t want to. Take me home. Let me go, I tell you. Let me go. I hate you. I hate you.’ And she rips off the ring and throws it into the little brook near us, right outa the car.

FROST (*makes a note*)

A little brook, eh?

BROOKS (*aside to FROST*)

Sh. Sh. Well, what happened?

WALTERS (*after a slight pause, speaking a bit faster*)

I don’t know what. But I think to myself. Aw, what the hell. I’ll give her the works. I don’t care, and besides, I was sore. Jeez, figger throwin’ away my ring, the ring that would have made her my own wife. I was sore. I pulled her out of the car and laid her on the grass and just—

FROST

Forced her?

WALTERS (*speaking quite rapidly now*)

Yea. Then she began to cry and yell. Then she said, ‘I’ll have you arrested. I’ll have you put in jail.’ And she called me all kinds of dirty names. Well, I don’t know, I was sore. Now get this, cause you would have done the same, maybe. I get peeved and I hit her. She goes down. (*Slight pause.*) I’m sure it was that sharp

rock under her head that did the killin', 'cause I couldn't hit hard enough to kill anybody, although maybe I could, but anyway it wasn't like that D. A. said, that I hit her with the rock, but I didn't mean it,—honest, I didn't mean it—

[*Stops abruptly.*]

BROOKS

Anything else? Any more?

WALTERS (*slowly, wearily*)

Huh? More? No—buddy—I'm tired. (*Apologetically.*) I don't feel like goin' on. You guys know the rest.

BROOKS

Sure, we do, sure. Well, thanks. I'll do somethin' for you some day.

WALTERS

See what you can do for my mother. Will ya?

FROST

Sure we will. We'll run her a newspaper fund—O.K.?

WALTERS

Gee. Thanks.

FROST

Well, so long. Good luck.

WALTERS

So long, fellers. Thanks a lot for comin'.

BROOKS

So long.

[GUARD AND REPORTERS *exit*.

WALTERS (*in a hollow tone*) .

Say boys, wouldn't I feel tickled to get a thirty day stay? I've got more hopes now than I had two hours ago. I was pretty low then, I guess. The warden's secretary promised me that he'd stand right near the telephone.

KIRBY

You'll get it, Seven.

WALTERS

I still got hopes.

[*Slight pause.*

JACKSON

What time is it, Nine?

KIRBY

Near to it, Sunny. Near to it. Pray hard.

JACKSON

Ah is, Red Boy. I'm praying hard as hell.

WALTERS

Say, I'm beginning to feel funny again in the belly. It's like a cramp and—

PRINCIPAL KEEPER (*enters*)

I've got to read this.

[*Reads Death Warrant to Seven.*

DEATH WARRANT

People of the State of Oklahoma

Vs

Richard Walters

.....

State of Oklahoma

County of Elmira.....s. s.

To the Agents and Warden of the Keystone Prison at Keystone, Oklahoma.

WHEREAS: at a trial term of the County Court, held in and for the County of Elmira at the Elmira County Court House, in the village of Hutchinson, County of Elmira, State of Oklahoma, on the ninth day of April 1929, and on the days following, Richard Walters was placed on trial for the murder of Ethel Wayne Simmons in the said County of Elmira on the fifteenth day of December, 1928; and upon said trial was found guilty of murder in the first degree for said killing and on the sixteenth day of April, 1929, and on the eighteenth day of April, 1929, was sentenced to be put to death in the manner provided by the law on some day in the week beginning the 26th day of May, 1929; now:

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED, that execution on the said sentence be done upon said Richard Walters by you, the said Agent and Warden of the Keystone Prison, in the manner provided by the law, on such day of the week beginning on the 26th day of May, 1929 as you shall determine, within the walls of your said prison, or the yard or enclosure thereto adjoining.

Witness my hand and seal at Hutchinson, County of Elmira, State of Oklahoma, aforesaid, this eighteenth day of April, 1929.

James Carney Leffingworth
County Judge of Elmira County,
Oklahoma, Presiding.

Given under my hand
and seal and attested by the
said court this 18th day of
April, 1929.

Daniel Corrigan

Clerk

That's all, Seven. Anything you want to say, say now.
Your mother asked me to get your last words for her.

WALTERS

I'd send her a telegram if I had the money. But I gave
it all away to Thirteen.

JACKSON

Here's some.

[He extends a bill through the bars.]

WALTERS

Will you send it, Mr. Callahan?

*[GUARD takes the bill, gives it to the PRINCIPAL
KEEPER.]*

CALLAHAN

What do you want to tell her?

WALTERS

Tell her I'm laughin', and jokin', and singin'. Tell her

I'm thinkin' of her. Tell her I'm all right. All right. Got that? That my thoughts are all of her—

CALLAHAN

I'll do it now. Stay here, Harris.
[*Exits.*]

WALTERS (*passing slippers*)

Do ya want these slippers, Red?

KIRBY

No, I gotta pair. I'll give 'em to Sunny.

WALTERS

All right.

JACKSON (*takes them from GUARD, who took them from KIRBY*)

Thanks, Boss. Ah'm still prayin' fo' yuh.

WALTERS

Uh-huh. Say, Guard light me a cigarette, will ya.
(GUARD *does so. Suddenly breaks into song, away off-key*)

"A little white light will lead you to my blue heaven.
A smiling face, a fire-place, a cozy room—"
[*Stops abruptly.*]

KIRBY

Hold on, Seven. The Governor's liable to give you that stay yet. I'll bet he's jest lettin' ya get up tight in order to scare ya. Ya know the Legislature is in session now, and he can't go to bed before midnight. He might wire or phone any minute now.

WALTERS

All right. But, if I don't get that stay, I'm going to try to set a good example here. They say that a fellow has never died here who didn't show weakness. I'm going to show them that I can go like a man. I can, all right. I can. I can.

O'AMORO

I hate to see you go, buddy, but if ya have to go, it's better to take it like a man. Don't weaken.

WALTERS

I—hate—to—go.

JACKSON

Here comes the keys.

[GUARD enters with the PRIEST who is let into Cell Seven. There he administers the Holy Communion.]

O'CONNOBS

Our Father who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen. Read the prayer, Walters.

WALTERS (*swallowing*)

Almighty God, unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid; cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of Thy Holy Spirit that we may perfectly love Thee,

and worthily magnify Thy Holy Name; through Thy Christ, Our Lord; Amen.

O'CONNORS

Lord, have mercy on us.

Christ, have mercy on us.

Lord, have mercy on us. (*He turns some pages.*) Now read the other prayer.

WALTERS

O Lord Jesus, God of my heart, and Life of my soul, (*He breaks down and sobs.*) O Jesus Christ, get me out of here, don't let me go, don't let me die. I'll do anything you say, only don't let me go, please Jesus, I'll cut my arm off, I'll cut my leg off, Jesus, don't let me—

O'CONNORS (*interrupting*)

Calm yourself, boy, calm yourself. There, there. (*Pause.*) Now repeat after me, O God, who has saved me and forgiven me.

WALTERS (*brokenly*)

O God, who has saved me and forgiven me—

O'CONNORS

Hear my supplications—

WALTERS

Hear my supplications.

O'CONNORS

And take me unto thy eternal keeping—

WALTERS

And take me unto thy eternal keeping.

O'CONNORS

Amen. Domine, nostrum dignus, ut intres sub tectum meum set tautum dic verbo, et sanabitur anima mea. (*Repeat three times, then.*) Corpus Domini nostri Jesus Christi custodiat animam tuam in vitam æternom, Amen. Now Richard Walters, let us pray. (*Blesses him.*)

Benedictio Dei Omnipotentis Patris et Filio. Et Spiritus Sancti descendant super te, et maneat semper. Amen.

[*Exit from cell to green door and remains there reading prayers.*]

WALTERS (*as the PRIEST is let out of the cell*)

I hate to go, but it looks like it's gotta be done.

[*THE PRIEST now stands near the green door reading quietly from his book.*]

KIRBY

Don't give up hope.

WALTERS

I still got hopes but they're gettin' weak.

WERNER

Hol——mes!

WALTERS

Light me a cigarette.

[*There is a tense air of expectancy that grows heav-*]

ier and heavier. More and more intense. One can almost feel it, touch it.

Let me out with the boys, O'Flaherty, I wanna tell 'em all good-bye.

O'FLAHERTY

I can't do it, Seven. I would if I could, but it would be against the rules. I'm awfully sorry. I wish I could.

WALTERS (*with attempted nonchalance*)

Oh, I don't care. 'Sall right.

[*He is given a lighted cigarette.*]

I'm not takin' it as hard as I thought I'd be. I'm pretty nervous though; I never had anything to do with electricity before. Wonder how it feels? Wonder if a guy knows anything? I hope it won't take long. They say Skippy Woodworth turned all his insides red from the burning. His brain too. Is that right about them keepin' the brains here in the hospital for findin' out things? I don't think my insides'll turn red. They got it perfected by now. Skippy was a long time ago. I hope my insides don't turn red—

MAYOR

Aw, ya never know what hits ya. It's all over in a few shakes. Brace up.

WALTERS (*speaking in a sort of strange monotone*)

Ya know it's funny. I was worse at my trial than I am now. I almost broke down at my trial. I lost fifteen and a half pounds, while the case was in court. (*Suddenly as if in anguish.*) Give me some more coffee, fer Christ's sakes!

MAYOR

Oh, my God.

WALTERS (*GUARD gives him coffee*)

Huh! Well, here's to the old death house, boys!

CALLAHAN (*enters with more GUARDS. Cell Seven is unlocked by the PRINCIPAL KEEPER*)

All right, Seven. Let's go.

[SEVEN *exits cell slowly.*

WALTERS (*wavers, but the GUARDS hold him on either side. Gulps and swallows with difficulty*)

I wanna say good-bye to the boys.

CALLAHAN

All right. Start back there with the nigger.

WALTERS (*crosses to Thirteen; the GUARDS follow him, but have released their hold on him*)

Good-bye, Sunny. I won't shake hands. It's bad luck.

JACKSON

Good-bye, Mister Walters. Ah hope mah prayahs done yuh some good.

WALTERS (*crosses to Eleven*)

Good-bye, Eddie. I don't know which of us is better off.

WERNER

Good-bye, son. Farewell. (*Beckons to him with finger to come closer.*) If you should meet Louis there—tell him that I—

WALTERS (*interrupts*)

O.K. Eddie. I'll do it.

KIRBY

Good-bye, kid. Stand right up.

WALTERS

Huh. I think I'm doin' about as well as you would do.

KIRBY

I know you are.

WALTERS

Good-bye.

KIRBY

S'long. Don't fergit to hold it.

WALTERS (*as he crosses slowly to Five, he looks down upon his split trouser-leg*)

Huh. They split my pants, and I don't like it much. This is a new style boys. How do you like it? Hello, Five. Give me a drag, will ya? (*The GUARDS seize him, as he bends over to take a puff.*) Don't worry. I ain't gonna run away.

MEARS

Good-bye, Seven. Stay with 'em.

WALTERS

I'll make it. Good-bye, Killer John Mears.

MEARS

Good-bye, Richard Walters. Give 'em my best regards. (*Laughs.*) Laugh at 'em.

WALTERS

I will. I will. I can do it. Good-bye, Freddie. I hope you get a stay.

MAYOR

Hope so. Good-bye. I'll meet ya in two weeks. Wait for me.

WALTERS

Uh-huh. S'long. Glad I met ya, One.

D'AMORO

Likewise. Good-bye.

[WALTERS is now again held by the GUARDS. They hold him on either side, by wrist and shoulder.]

WALTERS

This is the last mile. (*He is now at the green door, the PRINCIPAL KEEPER CALLAHAN behind him and the PRIEST and a GUARD in front. The GUARD unlocks the green door, yanks at it but it sticks. Almost hysterically.*) Say, Five! They can't get that damned door open. What d'ya think of that?

MEARS

Take those keys and open it for them, Seven!

[Laughs.]

WALTERS (*slowly*)

I'd stay right here until next Christmas before I'd open it for them. (*The door is finally opened.*) Well, it's open. I'll say good-bye to everybody again. So long everybody! (*Cries of "Good-bye, So long," etc.*) I wish I'm the last one who ever sits in that goddam, bastard chair. . . .

[He exits.]

[The lights suddenly grow dim after a pause and the whine of the motor is heard. Pause. Lights go up. MAYOR breaks down and sobs. Pause. Lights grow dim again.]

MEARS (*as the lights go dim for the second time*)

They're givin' him the juice again. (*Shouts in a terrible rage.*) What the hell are they tryin' to do? Cook him?

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

ACT TWO

Scene: The scene is the same as the First Act, except that SUNNY JACKSON has been placed in Cell Seven. It is late in the afternoon, about five or six hours before the time set for the execution of FRED MAYOR. DRAKE is now on guard near the door right. Two weeks have passed since the time of the first act. JACKSON is singing. The song is heard an instant before the curtain rises. It rises slowly. The men in the cells are either leaning up against their cell-doors or lying on their cots. KIRBY and JACKSON are engaged in a game of checkers. The stool on which the checker board rests, is in front of the wall between their cells. Each man can see the entire board, but cannot see each other. They play slowly and very carefully. They have plenty of time.

The curtain rises:

JACKSON (*sings*)

You go—ah'll go with you,
Open yo mouf, ah'll speak fo' you,
Lawdy, if ah go, tell me what to say,
Cause they won't believe in me.

[*Repeats, and a pause.*

You go. ah'll go with you. Open—your— (KIRBY jumps three men. Thinks for an instant.) All right—Mister Red Boy—but I'll beat you in the end.

KIRBY

Want to raise the bet?

JACKSON

No—ah don't. A bag of Durham is plenty. It's yoah move—(KIRBY *moves*.) Ah'm getting so hungry, ah could eat these bars,—if ah could chew 'em.

KIRBY

Ought to be about time for supper.

MEARS

How yuh feelin', Mayor?

MAYOR

Got a pain over here, near my heart. Hope I stand up.

MEARS

What're you thinkin' of, kid?

MAYOR

I'm thinkin' of a lot of things, of Walters—how he went last week. I'm thinkin' of my girl—Elaine. What she's gotta go through—

D'AMORO

Elaine? Is that her name? (*Slight pause*.) Why don't she come and see you?

MAYOR

She's sick. Can't travel. She'll give birth any day now.

D'AMORO

Well—that'll be tough on her, all right. Havin' a kid without a name.

MAYOR

What do you mean without a name? We're married.
We got hitched up in court, right after the sentence.

D'AMORO

Oh, you did? Well then—that's all right.

MAYOR (*laconically*)

Yea, all right. (*meditatively*) Ha, you should see
her. Elaine, some girl—that's a nice name—Elaine—

WERNER (*suddenly bursting into recitation*)

Elaine the fair, Elaine the lovable
Elaine, the lily maid of Astolat—

KIRBY

Shut up, Eddie.

MAYOR

Let 'im, Red. Let 'im go on. That's pretty. I read that
once in high school. It was about King Arthur and
his knights, wasn't it?

KIRBY

I don't know. Go on, Eddie! The kid likes it.

WERNER

High in her chamber up on a tower to the east
Guarded the sacred shield of Lancelot—

MAYOR (*interrupts excitedly to D'AMORO*)

Go on, Eddie, go on.

WERNER

Which first she placed—placed—placed—
[*Stops abruptly.*]

MAYOR

Go on, Ed, don't stop. He's got me all het up. Eddie!
Go on!

KIRBY

He don't remember.

MAYOR

Remember, Eddie—remember—

KIRBY

I'll bet if he could get the next word he could finish it.

D'AMORO

I'll bet he could.

WERNER (*quietly*)

Hol———mes!

KIRBY (*drily*)

Well, that ain't the word. It's no use—

MAYOR (*dully*)

I guess they'll want to shave my head. Shall I let them?

D'AMORO

What for? Walters got away with it. Didn't he?

MAYOR

That's right. I'll speak to the warden. (*Slight pause.*)
It's funny, One.

D'AMORO

What?

MAYOR

Your name. D'Amoro, meaning love, and that you should be next to me.

MEARS

Don't lose yourself, Mayor!

MAYOR (*shakes himself*)

I won't. (CALLAHAN *and* GUARD *enter*.) How much time have I?

MEARS

About six hours.

[CALLAHAN *crosses to* MAYOR.

CALLAHAN

I've got to read you this notice from the Warden. It's about the appeal.

MAYOR

You don't have to, I know all about it.

CALLAHAN

It's a rule. It must be read.

MAYOR

The hell with rules. I'm sick of rules.

D'AMORO (*with a jerk of his head towards* CALLAHAN)

Gotta have rules.

CALLAHAN (*unminding, reads*)

Mr. Frederick Mayor, Number 17263

Dear Sir:

I am sorry to inform you, that I am in receipt of an

order from the Court of Appeals, fixing the week beginning Monday, the sixteenth day of June, 1929, as the date for the carrying into effect, the original sentence of death in your case.

Very truly yours,

STANLEY T. STONE

Warden. Keystone Prison

Keystone, Oklahoma

That's all. (*Leaves.*)

D'AMORO (*as he exits*)

That's plenty.

KIRBY (*as SUNNY completes a coup*)

One for you, Sunny, that's eight games for me and three for you.

JACKSON

What about that last game yesterday, don't you count that?

KIRBY

That was yesterday.

JACKSON

Well, I'm creeping up on you. How about another?

KIRBY

All right. Stack 'em up. Hey, Screw, give us a light.

MAYOR (*after a slight pause*)

You know, I once read, that when a man is about to die—he was drowning in this story—that he'd give anything in the world to live just another minute. He'd give anything. What do you think of that, Five?

MEARS

Huh? I wasn't listenin'.

D'AMORO

I believe that, Three.

MAYOR

It said that if a drowning man could have just a square yard of earth, in the middle of an ocean, he'd be satisfied to stay there all his life instead of dying just that minute.

MEARS

That's right.

MAYOR

I'm afraid to die, honest. I got everything to live for. I got a good family, I got a good trade, and I got a wonderful girl. Why do I have to—die? I'm too young—I ain't lived at all. (*Pause.*) I always wanted to travel and see the world and I never got the chance. I worked so goddam hard. First I was a porter, when I was fifteen, and I had to leave school when my mother died. Then I was a shipping clerk. And now I'm head shipping clerk, bossing fifteen men, and makin' good money.

KIRBY

But you did kill him, didn't you? I hope you ain't claimin' to us, that you're innocent.

MAYOR (*wearily*)

No, I don't claim that. I admit it. I shot him—

D'AMORO

Why?

MAYOR

Why? Why? Christ! I don't know. I was nuts. Yeah. Why did I? Oh, sweetheart, my sweet girl—Poor kid, first she's my sweetheart, then she's my wife, and right away she's got to be my widow—Oh—Jesus—why—why the hell—?

MEARS (*slowly*)

Sweetheart—wife, and widow—all in three months.

MAYOR (*dully*)

Sweetheart—wife—widow—

[DRAKE *laughs*.

KIRBY

Brace up, Three, don't let that screw laugh at ya.

MEARS

Shut your mug, Screw.

DRAKE

Shut yerself, Mears. You don't give orders. You take 'em!

JACKSON (*to DRAKE*)

You is lower than whale dung at the bottom of the Dead Sea.

DRAKE

All right—I'll see you burn yet.

JACKSON

You keep youah mouth shut, or you'll be feeling my black hands on your throat.

DRAKE

Wouldn't you like to, Boogey?

KIRBY

If that nigger ever got you between his hands, you'd need Holy Communion quick.

JACKSON

Need somethin'!

MAYOR

Say, One— You want to see something nice?

D'AMORO

What is it?

MAYOR

It's a picture. Here, take a look at that.

[Passes it to him.]

D'AMORO (*looking*)

Is that your girl Elaine? Boy—she's nice. You're a lucky guy, Three.

MAYOR (*pleased*)

You think so?

D'AMORO

I'm telling you.

[Looking at the picture, shaking his head with admiration.]

MEARS

Let me see it, Fred.

MAYOR (*Sighs. Pause*)

I'd like to see that kid. I wonder if it'll ever be ashamed of me. I wish I could just talk to my girl.

MEARS

Nice girl. (*Silence.*) I don't blame you.
[*Passes back the picture.*]

MAYOR

Say, Red, do you think I could get away with that black cloth they put on your face?

KIRBY

Maybe. I don't think so. They put it on for a reason, you know. Must be a rule.

MAYOR

I'm sick of goddam rules—

KIRBY

Talking about rules, Fred, I'll tell you something. I had a cell-mate once in Salt Lake City, an old guy, quiet, nice. One day he says to me, 'You know, Mr. Kirby,' I celled with him two years and he allus called me *Mr.* Kirby. 'You know,' he said, 'I should not be here,' 'Why,' says I. 'Cause every son-of-a-gun of inmate thinks he should be out and free,' 'Wal,' says he, he was a farmer, 'I'm here for five years for stealin' my own property.' 'How is that?' I asks. 'Well, it was like this: I was by trade once a carpenter, and my neighbor wanted to buy my tools—but he had no money. He wanted me to wait for the crops.' So this guy waited. See? Well, the neighbor takes the tools and used them and puts them away.

But he don't pay this guy for the tools. He just keeps them locked in his barn. Well this guy gets sore and goes one day, in daylight, in broad daylight, mind you, and gets into the barn and hooks back his own tools.

MAYOR

So he was arrested, I suppose—

KIRBY

Right. And he was sent up for five years.

MAYOR

Was that the rule on that sort of burglary?

KIRBY

Yea, that was the rule for that sort of burglary.

MAYOR (*slight pause—then*)

Ain't it funny for Werner to remember all those poems—?

MAYOR

Why! He's got one that fits everything. I hope he don't start that one about the midnight special, when I have to go, if I have to go.

KIRBY

Let's hope.

MAYOR

I once saw a moving-picture. You know what they had in France when they had their Revolution; they used to have what they called—a guillotine—like a knife—and they'd pull it up, it was heavy, and then,

let go, and it'd come down and chop off the head of some swell dame or noble. Well, in this picture, this Duke or noble is supposed to go to the guillotine with his wife, or sister, or some woman, and it showed how they began dancing and singing what they called the minuet. Now I don't believe that's true. I don't believe that about the dancin' and the singin' at all. Do you guys?

D'AMORO

Naw, I don't believe it.

KIRBY

Maybe they started like Walters did, but they didn't keep it up. Oh no.

MAYOR

Well, you got to give Walters credit. He had his nerve all right. All right. Did you hear that bloke singin' ten minutes before his time—?

D'AMORO

And pullin' that crack about waitin' for Christmas when they couldn't open the door.

KIRBY

That's nerve.

MEARS

That's crap—that's what it is. That ain't nerve. He was so afraid he had to sing to be able to walk straight. I could hear his knees beatin' time on each other from over here. Nerve, huh. Say, Red, didn't you see guys vomit up their guts walkin' to that door?

KIRBY

I did see that.

MEARS

Why, if they'd examine half the men even before the switch is pulled for the juice, they'd find they could save current.

MAYOR

Say, Jack, shut up, will ya please.

MEARS

I forgot myself. Just stay there.

MAYOR

I'm trying. What time is it about?

MEARS

Plenty time. Plenty time.

[*Pause.*]

JACKSON

Ah shuah didn't wanna see that fella Waltahs go.

KIRBY

That's all right. You'll meet him in Heaven, Sunny.

JACKSON

Ah'm thinkin' ah won't ever meet him, nor you, nor any white man up in Heaven, Red Boy. You know that song—I got shoes, you got shoes—(*Begins to sing.*) All Gawd's 'chillun got shoes. When ah get to Heaven ah'm gonna put on my shoes, ah'm gonna walk all ovah Gawd's Heaven— Well, that song is all one grand lie—and it's a fool niggah that believes it.

Don't you all know theah is two Heavens, one foah the white man and one foah the black man? Why—if ah could sneak mah way into that theah white man's Heaven by accident or somethin'—why youah keepahs up theah would say to me— What for you want in this Heaven anyhow? Who told you to come heah? Don't you all know this ain't youah place? Git ovah in your own niggah Heaven long by that theah toilet, you black bastard, before you is sent to niggah hell.

KIRBY

What—have you got a hell—too—for the niggers?

JACKSON (*bitterly*)

Shuah—shuah there is a niggah hell. Do you think they're gonna let us fry in the same fiah with yoh white meat?—Hell no! (*Slight pause.*) Youah move—Red Boy.

[*Slight pause.*]

HARRIS

Supper for Number Three.

[HARRIS *brings tray, sets it on stool—exits.*]

D'AMORO

What did you order, Three? →

MAYOR

Nothing much. I can't eat well.

[DRAKE *closes door on HARRIS and brings tray to*
MAYOR.

D'AMORO

I can't sleep, since the last coupla weeks.

[DRAKE *pushes tray through aperture in* MAYOR's *cell.*

Then proceeds to return to his seat. MEARS, who has been against the bars of his cell, seizes him with one arm about the throat. The convicts look on, motionless, their eyes almost popping—JACKSON lets the checkers fall slowly from his hand to the cement floor one by one. KIRBY is still seated. He is prepared, perhaps to continue the game when MEARS will have been shot. DRAKE lets out a smothered cry of shock and pain. MEARS quietly but firmly chokes him into insensibility. Before allowing DRAKE's body to fall, he appropriates the gun and keys. Then he unlocks the cell. He examines the body quickly, then goes to door right, and looks into outer corridor. Satisfied, he returns to DRAKE's body and removes wrist watch and places it on his own wrist.

MEARS

It's a quarter past five, men. We got forty-five minutes before the shift. We gotta work fast. We ain't got a minute to waste. Now watch me, I'm the leader—I'm running this—I'm boss—Get me? (*Opens Cell Seven.*) Come out, Sunny.

JACKSON

Ah'm with you, boss.

MEARS (*unlocks Cell Three*)

Come on out, Mayor.

MAYOR

Mears, Mears. You're a man, Mears.

MEARS

All right, keep your shirt on. Don't get excited. (*Un-*

locks Cell One.) All right, One, out. Maybe you won't be sitting on that chair on the 29th.

KIRBY

Maybe he won't live to see the 29th.

MEARS

Sure, maybe he won't, but what of it? What's the matter? Ain't you joining with us?

KIRBY

The Warden's a pretty good skate, Mears, you shouldn't try to make trouble for him or if you do, do it yourself, an' don't be draggin' us in with you.

MEARS

Draggin' yuh in? Why you old heel. You oughta fall on your knees and beg me for the chance to let you in on this.

KIRBY

But the Warden—

MEARS (*interrupts*)

To hell with the Warden. He's a good fellow, is he? Sure he's good. He's so good he don't even bother with us. He's so good he lets louses like these to take care of us.

KIRBY

Have you gotta plan?

MEARS

Plan? What the hell do you think I've been doin' all

this time? Sittin', countin' cockroaches? Sure I gotta plan, and a damn good one.

KIRBY

What is it?

MEARS (*domineering*)

I'll tell yuh when I'm ready. But come on and join with us, or I'm not responsible for ya.

KIRBY

Well, as long as there's a chance—

MEARS (*interrupting*)

Chance? Your chance begins the second you step outa that cell. (*Slight pause.*) Or, would you like to burn better? Didn't ya see enough? Ask Three here how he felt walkin' outta that cell instead of walkin' into that place (*points*) there. How do ya feel, Mayor?

MAYOR

I can breathe now. I feel like I been born again. Let's get to work, Killer.

KIRBY

An' if we get shot—?

MEARS

So ya will. At least you'll get it suddenly, when you don't expect it. When you're not bein' washed, combed, and prepared like a stuffed goose ready for the cookin'. At least you won't be hearin' a goddam clock beatin' away the minutes of your life. You won't have

to walk up to it, an' have a priest tell you to make yourself ready for God.

KIRBY

All right, Mears. I wasn't against ya. I was only tryin' ta look at it reasonable. I'm with yuh.

[*Extending his hand—They shake hands.*]

JACKSON (*gestures to Cell Eleven*)

What about him—Boss?

MEARS

Watch that door, D'Amoro. You, Sunny, that one. (*Gestures to the said doors.*) Come on out, Eddie. You're free now. (*Opens Cell Eleven.*) So ya can stop all the bull about bein' nuts. (*Quiet. Entering the cell a trifle.*) Come on now. I know ya. You can fool the doctors, but not me. Oh, no. We need every man here, so quit the comedy.

[*MEARS takes hold of his arm and shakes him.*]

WERNER

No—no. Hol——mes.

MEARS (*continued*)

Git out before I break your head open. (*Sound of blows is heard, WERNER is moaning.*) Come on, or I'll knock ya every way but loose. Stop the crap.

WERNER (*pitifully*)

Hol——mes!

MEARS (*exiting cell*)

He is crazy, fellows. I thought he was foolin' all the

time. We'll keep him locked up so he won't be in the way.

D'AMORO (*to MEARS*)

How you gonna handle this?

MEARS

Listen. The main thing is we gotta get more guns, and I figured we'd better—

D'AMORO

Say, Mears, you take my advice and—

MEARS

Shut up.

D'AMORO

What?

MEARS

Ya heard me, wop.

D'AMORO

Huh? If I had a gat you wouldn't talk that way.

MEARS (*suddenly pushing the gun into D'AMORO'S stomach*)

No?—I'd talk this way.

D'AMORO (*insolently*)

Would ya—?

MEARS (*now pushing the gun against his chest*)

Yes—

D'AMORO

Oh—

MEARS

I would—

[*Places the gun under D'AMORO'S chin and raises it.*]

D'AMORO (*without moving*)

All right—Boss. All right.

MEARS

O.K. then. Everything I say goes. And I'm not going to waste a minute arguing. See? Watch that screw. He's moving around. Throw him down there in Thirteen. (*JACKSON and KIRBY do so, MEARS follows.*) Hit him on the head.

JACKSON

Ah'll do that—with pleasure.

[*Exits cell.*]

MEARS

Open that door, Sunny. (*Points left.*) Kirby, D'Amoro get on that one. (*Points right.*) If that shift comes, get him. You two follow me.

[*Exits left followed by MAYOR and JACKSON.*]

D'AMORO

You think we'll get through?

KIRBY

What the hell's the difference?

D'AMORO

I think he's right, Nine. I think it's better to go down fighting.

KIRBY

Yea. He's right— You're one lucky wop, feller.

D'AMORO

Yea?

KIRBY

You bet. You were pretty close then.

D'AMORO

I felt I was.

MEARS (*entering from left followed by MAYOR and JACKSON*)

Nobody in there yet. We got the doors bolted down. Guess they're in the office next door. Now all of you remember. Got to rush. Sudden, quick. Before they can pull. D'Amoro, Kirby stay here. Git yourself one of those iron stools. Git stools, everybody. Remember don't hit too hard, fellows, I want 'em alive. [MEARS *exits right followed by MAYOR and JACKSON*.

D'AMORO

He's got nerve. I can see that. He'd do anything.

KIRBY

He'd have plugged me, if I hadn't come in with him.

D'AMORO

Ya think so?

KIRBY

I know it, One. When that guy looks at you, ya feel like apologizin' fer being alive.

D'AMORO

Ya call him Killer, don't youse? Who did he kill?

KIRBY

Why, he was chief lieutenant on the big Southside Gang in Chi'. So when he tells you to do somethin', jump. (*Door slams off right, followed by sounds of fighting, shots, chair breaking, two shots, footsteps, door slams.*) Shh. Somebody comin'.

D'AMORO

It's them coming back.

[O'CONNORS, PEDDIE, O'FLAHERTY *enter followed by* MAYOR *with two guns. PEDDIE is bleeding at the forehead.*

MEARS (*off right*)

Come on, ya damn screws. Git in there. Muy pronto! (*CALLAHAN and HARRIS enter followed by* MEARS, *who has a cut on his cheek.*) Put yer hands up, everybody. Frisk 'em men—get their cartridges. That's what we need.

MAYOR (*pulling out a pair of handcuffs from a guard's pocket*)

Got some bracelets, Killer.

D'AMORO

Same here. And here's a knife. And some money.

MEARS

Keep their money. We might need it. Put the bracelets on 'em. No, wait. How many you got? Two? Well,

just put 'em on Callahan and O'Connors. Put the rest of those guys in the cells.

O'CONNORS

Mears—do you realize what you're doing—?

MEARS

Can it, O'Connors! I got no time for any lectures. Put these two guys against that door. (*Gestures to left. It is done.*) Get on those winders, men. We can guard the whole place from these cell-winders. This is the only approach.

CALLAHAN (*authoritatively*)

Mears, put down your gun.

MEARS (*turning to him slowly*)

Are you talking to me?

CALLAHAN

Put down that gun and have these cuffs taken off me. Don't you hear me? (MEARS *looks at him silently, steadily*, CALLAHAN *speaking rapidly, very enraged.*) I'll have you in a strait-jacket in an hour.

MEARS

Yea . . . ?

CALLAHAN (*furiously*)

Yes. And I'll have the hose on you, too.

MEARS (*advances to him slowly, then stops close by him and continues to look at him, a pause, and CALLAHAN slowly seats himself on the stool from which he has*

risen, the realization coming over him that his authority is now quite useless. MEARS, satisfied, turns to the men. Speaking staccato)

D'Amoro! Mayor! You two get to work loosening them bars in Cell Seven. I gotta have one window clear. Don't stand lookin' at me! Grab that stool or somethin'.

MAYOR

I saw an axe on the wall in the office—near the fire-extinguisher. That would be—

MEARS

Thata boy. Get it, and get a pencil and some paper while you're in there.

[MAYOR *exits*.

O'CONNORS

You do not know what you are doing, man. The law is stronger than—

MEARS

Shut up with your law!—I'm sick of your law and I'm sick of you and your talk of God!

O'CONNORS

You have no right—

MEARS

O'Connors! I'm the law now!

D'AMORO

Say, Boss, where's Sunny?

MEARS -

What?

D'AMORO

The nigger, where is he?

MEARS

Dead.

D'AMORO (*slight pause*)

Oh. (*Pause.*) Did you get them all? The screws?

MEARS

No—two got away. (*Noise outside, voices, shouts, footsteps running.*) Get on those windows, fellows. Plug anybody you see. We got almost three hours before it gets dark.

D'AMORO (*Suddenly. Loudly*)

Get down, Kirby. (*He shoots.*) I got 'im. The damn screw—had a sure bead on you.

KIRBY

Thanks. One hand watches the other. Eh?

D'AMORO

Sure. That's the idea.

MAYOR (*enters carrying axe, and pencil and paper*)

Here it is—Killer. Which window?

MEARS

Give it to One. (*MAYOR gives axe to D'AMORO.*) Get those bars out Tom, but keep low. Don't take no

chances. (D'AMORO *gets to work*, MEARS *to* MAYOR.) Sit down—write. Warden—We, the convicts of the death house, (*The CONVICTS at the windows, listen attentatively, very interested; CALLAHAN and O'CONNORS lean forward from the floor, the imprisoned GUARDS come close to the bars of their respective cells; shooting outside has ceased temporarily.*) demand our liberty. We'll take with us O'Connors and your brother-in-law, the Principal Keeper. We want a big closed car in the best shape. Plenty of gas and oil—good tires. Fours hours start—no double crossing. Then we'll drop your men—safely.

D'AMORO

We can . . .

[*Shots outside.*]

MEARS

Now—if we do not get these conditions in full by— (*Looks at his watch.*) nine o'clock tonight, we're goin' to kill one of your guards. Signed. The C. C.'s of the Death House.

HARRIS

What? What?—What was that?

O'CONNORS

For God's sake, Mears, you don't really mean that?

HARRIS

Mears—you're not gonna, Mears, are you?

KIRBY

Say, Mears—they're wavin' a flag. They want to get the body of that guard down there.

MEARS

All right. Let 'em. We'll give them the note. (MEARS takes note from MAYOR.) Wave something back. (KIRBY rips sheet from cot and waves it out window.) Stay here—Three. I've got to see how it looks. (Goes to window of KIRBY's cell.) Hey—there below. I'm throwin' a note down. Give it to Warden Stone. Tell him I want quick action. No funny works—a big closed car. Remember, I mean business— Now get back pronto, and don't come near here unless you feel like bein' buried. Git. (To the men.) Shoot back fellows, but be easy on your bullets.

D'AMORO

How many we got, Boss?

MEARS (*examining the little pile of cartridges in the corridor on the floor*)

About forty or fifty, but I'm putting away a half a dozen right now.

[*Does so.*]

KIRBY

What for?

MEARS

What for? For us.

KIRBY (*shot from outside and the prison siren commences*)

Oh.

[*Turns back to the window.*]

D'AMORO

Machine Guns!

[MEARS *is engaged in apportioning the cartridges. MAYOR comes to him for some. Many shots from outside.*

MEARS (*with exultation*)

Well, men, it's on. The war's begun. Shoot—you bastards. Shoot.

[MAYOR *returns to the cell.*

WERNER (*as the prison siren continues its awful, increasing wail*)

Hol———mes!

[*The siren increases in intensity until its shriek is fairly deafening and the CURTAIN comes down quickly.*

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

ACT THREE

Scene: Same. About four hours later. The cell windows are chipped in many places from hundreds of bullets and here and there on the corridor floor, are shot cartridges, and chips of stone.

Curtain Rises:

MAYOR and D'AMORO are at the window in Cell Seven, working on the last bar. MEARS is pacing up and down in the corridor. CALLAHAN and O'CONNORS, on left, watch him anxiously. The guards, HARRIS and PEDDIE, are in Cell Nine together, O'FLAHERTY and DRAKE in another cell. The men at the window, have been conversing, and the curtain rises in the middle of their conversation. Somewhere in this conversation between MAYOR and D'AMORO, MEARS ceases his pacing and stops near the door right, leans up against it, looks at his watch and waits silently. Shots from outside. Conversation of MAYOR and D'AMORO is quite accelerated.

MAYOR

No. I wasn't in the war. Were you?

D'AMORO

Nope. I was too young. My brother went.

MAYOR

What was he? What'd he do?

D'AMORO

He was on the machine gun squad.

MAYOR

Jeez. That's what we ought to have. A machine gun.

D'AMORO

Uhhuh. We could use one.

MAYOR

Do you know how to work one?

D'AMORO

Sure thing. I worked one lots of times. Easy as hell. The old ones in the Army had to have two men on each, one guy on the trigger, and the other pullin' the cartridge belt through and pourin' water—

MAYOR

Water?

D'AMORO

Yeah. You see, they get too hot. But now, they just wind 'em up and the bullets go by themselves—and there's a coolin' system inside too—they make 'em pretty handy now—

MAYOR

Wish we had one. We're runnin' pretty low on ammunition.

KIRBY (*coming downstage*)

Mears. (MEARS *who has been looking at the watch, raises his head, looks at him questioningly.*) What time is it?

MEARS

Nine thirty-five.

KIRBY

Nine-thirty-five?

MEARS

Yea.

KIRBY

Well—?

MEARS

Well.

KIRBY

Well—that last note read nine thirty, didn't it?
(MEARS *nods his head.*) Then—time is up. Eh?

MEARS

That's right.

[*Comes closer to* KIRBY.]

KIRBY (*coming closer to* MEARS, *low*)

Are you goin' do it?

MEARS (*after slight pause*)

Don't you know me—Red?

KIRBY (*after slight pause*)

Then—who's first?

MEARS

We'll take that guy Drake first. I want you on that

window. I need you there. You got sense. (KIRBY goes to window.) Mayor! C'm'ere.

MAYOR (*comes down stage*)

Time up, Jack?

MEARS

Right. (MAYOR *nods*.) Get Drake out.

MAYOR

Is—Drake—?

MEARS

Get him out.

MAYOR (*takes deep breath*)

All right. (*Unlocks cell*.) Drake, get in here. Come on, move.

DRAKE

What do you want of me?

MEARS

I'll show you what I want of you. We threw another note out of the window awhile ago. They sent over a man to pick it up. He brought it to the Warden. He read it. We're still waitin' for the answer.

DRAKE (*hoarsely*)

What did it say? The note?

MEARS

It said, that we're giving 'em till nine-thirty to come through. If he don't—

DRAKE

Well?

MEARS

Well, you're first. It's nine-thirty-five.

DRAKE

What the hell do you mean?

MEARS (*deliberately*)

I mean you're through—finished. Understand? Ya been a skunk of the worst sort. Get into that cell there. I don't wanta dirty up this place in here.

DRAKE

Say, you can't do that, Mears.

MEARS

Didn't you hear me? Get in there and say your prayers. I'll give you half a minute.

DRAKE

Mears, Mears, for Christ's sake!

MEARS (*kicks him in the face*)

Lick the floor, you son-of-a-bitch. But it ain't gonna help you none.

[*He drags him to the cell door.*]

O'CONNORS

Mears, I want you to listen to me. Consider, you're takin' a human life—

MEARS

Don't you worry, O'Connors. I considered it a long

time ago. (*Pushes the guard into the cell.*) I hope I miss you the first time, Drake, so that you'll have to go through it the second time.

DRAKE (*crazy with fear*)

Mears, Mears. Don't do it. Please, Mears, Jesus Christ, almighty. Mears!

MEARS (*he shoots. Slight pause. He exits cell. CALLAHAN stares at him amazed. He can't believe what has happened*)

I had to hit him on the first shot, Callahan. I couldn't afford to miss him. We'll throw him out the window. To show them. Write another note, tell 'em that we're not stopping at anything. We mean what we say. Tell 'em in another twenty minutes another guy goes the same way.

MAYOR

O.K. Killer.

[MAYOR *writes rapidly. Slight pause.*

D'AMORO

Watch the front.

MEARS (*after a second's silence. Suddenly*)

All right—up with him. (*They push Drake's body through the window. A dull thud outside.*) Let 'em get to him. D'Amoro, Red, let 'em pull him away.

MAYOR (*at window*)

Say, John, just look at that moon. And those clouds. Ain't they pretty? Look just like a girl's—

KIRBY

Two guys comin' now. I'd like to plug 'em.

MAYOR

Don't do it.

D'AMORO

They're bringin' it back. Guess they must be readin' the note now. (*Suddenly screams warning.*) Duck, fellows! (*Noise of gun fire.*) There are state troopers now. They're gettin' more and more. Keep low.

MEARS

Don't waste your shots. Just keep 'em off from here.

CALLAHAN

Don't you see it's no use, Mears? They won't let you go.

MEARS

You better stop talkin', Callahan. I might pick on you next. At ten o'clock, another one of you guys is gonna go. (*Excitement among the GUARDS.*) What's the matter? You guys worried already? Plenty o' time, plenty o' time. Ya got till ten o'clock.

WERNER

Hol——mes!

MAYOR

What time is it, Killer?

MEARS (*examines his watch*)

Nine-fifty-five. Five minutes yet.

KIRBY

You think we oughta take another chance, Killer?

MEARS

I'm not thinkin', Red, I'm just takin' it. I stopped thinkin' when there's a chance, long ago. Would you be here if you'd hadn't taken a chance? Well, ya can never expect ta get out except on a chance.

KIRBY

I'm not kickin', Mears, understand me. (*He comes to door of the cell.*) But I can't see it, maybe you can show me. . . . Just what do you expect? It ain't at all reasonable for that Warden to let you go scot-free on those conditions, even if you killed the whole jail. . . .

MEARS (*interested this time*)

Why ain't it reasonable, Red? Why?

KIRBY (*wetting his lips, trying to word it as best as possible, for although he has the courage of his opinions, he is nevertheless very much afraid of MEARS*) Well, look what it means to him, personally. First—he loses his job—then, there's the big investigation that they always have in things like these; maybe he's been makin' graft, now that has nothin' to do with this, but that all comes out in the big clean up. Maybe he's even sent to jail. But figurin' he don't get caught, then where does he stand? Where's his reputation? Ya know what I mean—

MEARS (*thoughtfully*)

Yea, I know.

KIRBY (*slight pause*)

Well, what's it worth ta him? Don't you forget too, that outside all those items I mentioned, that that Warden is sent here to keep us guys in. That's his job. He can't go back on the men who give him the job—he can't—

MEARS (*quietly*)

It's ten o'clock, Red. Get this guy, Peddie out here.

KIRBY (*persisting*)

But—Killer—

MEARS (*relentlessly*)

Didn't you hear me, Red?

KIRBY

Yes, but—

MEARS (*still quietly*)

Well, then, get him the hell out here.

[KIRBY *pauses an instant, then proceeds to obey.*

PEDDIE (*as the door is being unlocked*)

Say, Mears, don't do it, will ya—. I got a wife and kids. Christ! (*The door is opened.*) I can't come out—I can't, Mears.

MEARS

Come—out.

PEDDIE (*not moving, frightened into immobility against the door-jamb*)

Why don't you take one of these single guys? Harris here is a bachelor. Why don't you take Harris?

HARRIS (*fiercely*)

You yellin' dog—you cheap yellin'—

O'CONNORS (*angered, emphatically, but helpless*)

This brutal slaying must stop.

MEARS (*quietly*)

Come out now, or I'll plug ya where ya stand—

PEDDIE (*with agony*)

I ain't movin'—I ain't, I tell ya. I'm too young—I'm only twenty-nine years old, honest, Mears—I can't, be a good fellow, will ya—

[*Drops back into cell.*]

MEARS

Get him out, Red.

KIRBY

Come on out!

PEDDIE

No. I can't. I can't.

KIRBY (*enters cell, struggles with the GUARD*)

I can't budge him, Killer. He's laying down. Holdin' on to the bed, an' I gotta watch this other guy—

MEARS

All right. Get on those windows. (*Goes up to cell door.*) Peddie, say your prayers.

[*Gestures to KIRBY to step back.*]

CALLAHAN

For Christ's sake, Mears.

PEDDIE

Don't, Mears. You mustn't, don't, don't—

HARRIS (*hoarsely*)

Watch out, Mears, watch out for me.

[MEARS shoots into cell. But the gun fails to explode.
There is only a click.

KIRBY

Whatsamatter?

MEARS (*exits. Pulls trigger again. Lowers gun, at same time taking bullets from pocket*)

How are your bullets, Red?

KIRBY

I got a couple.

MEARS

How about the other fellows?

KIRBY

About the same, I guess.

MEARS

Don't guess—find out.

KIRBY

I asked them for some a couple of minutes ago;—
Tom had only one.

MEARS

I got six.

KIRBY (*pause. MEARS is silent*)

We should have been more careful.

MEARS

We been here five hours. If we had enough bullets we could hold out a couple days easy. Six. Hmm. (*Pause.*) All right. We'll play the ace now, before we're caught with our pants down.

KIRBY

Him?

[*Indicating* CALLAHAN.]

MEARS

Right. We've waited long enough anyway. (*Inserts bullets.*) Six. One for him, and five for us.

KIRBY

That's right. Save them.

MEARS (*gesturing to the open cell*)

Lock 'em up!

HARRIS (*intense—he has been slowly going mad*)

Say Mears, who's next? Peddie or me? Peddie or me?

MEARS

You'll find out.

WERNER

Hol———mes!

HARRIS

I gotta know. I gotta know.

MEARS

Shut up, Screw.

HARRIS

I must know, Mears. I must. I gotta, please.

MEARS (*paying no attention to him*)

Mayor, come 'ere fer a minute. (MAYOR *does so.*)

This guy O'Flaherty. He's all right, ain't he?

[HARRIS *mumbles to himself incoherently.*

MAYOR

Sure. He's all right. He's been pretty white.

MEARS

We'll let him go?

MAYOR (*with enthusiasm*)

Gee. That'll be swell.

MEARS

Kirby, let O'Flaherty out.

KIRBY (*unlocking cell that O'FLAHERTY is in*)

Hey, O'Flaherty, come on out—

HARRIS (*grateful*)

Oh, thanks, Mears. I'm sorry I've been such a bastard.

Thanks a lot. Thanks. (*mumbles*)

O'FLAHERTY (*exits cell*)

Jesus—John—you ain't gonna do me, are ya?

MEARS (*slight pause, looks at him carefully*)

Come here. (*Takes him to left-stage.*) You see we mean business. Don't you? (O'FLAHERTY *nods his head in quick corroboration.*) Well, I'm leavin' ya go—free; but I want you to tell that Warden somethin', and I want you to tell him right. You

know what was written on those notes—don't ya?

O'FLAHERTY (*nods quickly*)

Yes, I know. I heard.

[O'FLAHERTY *is frightened by* MEARS's *quiet intensity.*

MEARS (*between his teeth*)

Well, I want you to tell that Warden that he ain't got no chicken-hearted sons-of-bitches here—that I'm prepared to carry out in every particular everything I say I'm gonna do. See?

O'FLAHERTY (*breathing heavily*)

Yea. Sure.

MEARS (*only pausing for breath*)

You tell him, now remember this—tell him that we got four men in here. Four—live—men. The guards, Harris and Peddie—

HARRIS (*interrupting wildly*)

No, no, not me. Not me. Don't let them kill me. Mears. Mears.

MEARS (*continuing after looking at HARRIS for an instant*)

—the priest and the Principal Keeper, his own brother-in-law. Tell him, I'm going to kill every one of them. I'm prepared to kill every one of them. Hear that?

O'FLAHERTY (*assenting, he cannot speak*)

Mm. Mmmm. Mmmm.

MEARS (*without stopping*)

Remember, if he don't come through with my demands, if he don't come through, say that Callahan goes in half an hour. (*Examines his watch.*) Principal Keeper Callahan at ten-forty-five o'clock. Get me? An' tell him I want that car in A-1 condition. Perfect. No funny works. See?

O'FLAHERTY (*relieved that this is the end of the torture*)

Yea. Everything. I'll remember ever blessed word. I thank ye for this—John. I'll never fergit ye. I'm thinkin' of retirin' anyway. My pension is beginning in a few months now, an'—

MEARS (*interrupts, abruptly*)

All right. Beat it. Let O'Flaherty out. An' don't get hurt when you're opening that door. Keep him in front of ya.

[D'AMORO and O'FLAHERTY exit. The shots are rather loud now, but, suddenly they stop altogether.]

HARRIS

Let me out too, Mears. Let me out too. I wanna get out, Mears, don't let them kill me—

MEARS

Shut up.

MAYOR (*watching at window*)

There he goes.

MEARS

Don't shoot the old guy. Is he there yet?

[D'AMORO returns.]

MAYOR

He's there now. He must be tellin' 'em.

D'AMORO

Anybody coming, Mayor? See anybody?

MAYOR

No—I don't. Do you, Tom?

D'AMORO

Nope. Nothin'.

HARRIS

I don't want to die, Mears. Don't let them kill me.

KIRBY

Maybe they'll send some guy any second now. Listen, Killer . . .

MEARS

Git on that window, Kirby. I got no time now—Callahan, get ready.

CALLAHAN

Me?

MEARS (*coldly*)

Yes, you. In fifteen minutes now, (*Glancing at his watch.*) at ten-forty-five. I just wanna give you a taste of what we get, in here. I want you to know that when this big hand here gets to ten-forty-five, (*Shows him the time piece.*) you're gonna get a thirty-eight size piece of lead in your head. See?

CALLAHAN

You don't mean that, Mears? You don't mean you're

going to do that? In cold blood? Without a goddam chance—?

MEARS

Huh! I never meant anything more in my life, Callahan. Didn't ya hear what I told O'Flaherty, that I meant what I said? Now, listen, I'm willin' to give ya a chance though I hate the guts in all of ya. You write what you want to the Warden, and tell him whatever you like, but remind him that he's got to ten-forty-five to make up his mind—

CALLAHAN (*looks at MEARS an instant, then hurriedly*)

All right. Give me a pencil.

MAYOR

Here. I'll hold the paper for you. (PRINCIPAL KEEPER *writes*. MAYOR *takes it and reads it*.) 'Stanley: Get me out of this. Mears desperate. For Christ's sake—give them what they want, or I'm a dead man at ten-forty. Stan: For Rose's sake. My blood'll be on your head. Frank Callahan.'

MEARS

Ten-forty eh? Wanna save five minutes. Just like a guy goin' to the chair. All right, D'Amoro. Wave the shirt. Drop the note, Mayor. They'll see it. (*It is done*.) Let 'em come and get it. And see that they don't try nothin'.

WERNER

Hol———mes!

HARRIS

Don't let them, Mears. Don't let them kill me. Mears, Mears.

KIRBY (*at the window*)

He's got it now. He's gone back with it.
[*Pause.*]

CALLAHAN

Well, what's going on? Can you see from there? Are they sending anyone?

D'AMORO

Yeah. Somebody's comin'. It's a trusty. He's got his hands over his head—

KIRBY

He's smart. He's an old convict.

VOICE (*off-stage, back of windows*)

I wanna talk to John Mears.

KIRBY

You, Mears.

MEARS

Watch everything, Fred. If they try anything on me, you finish this. (MAYOR *nods affirmatively.*) What do you want?

[*He is at the window.*]

VOICE

The Warden says . . . he can't give you what ya want. He says, he can't do nothin'. He can't even promise ya recommendation for clemency to the Governor, ya understand why—

MEARS

Well, what does he want? Hurry up.

VOICE

He just wants to call quits. He won't do ya anything fer this if ya stop—immediately. You'll just get the chair, only.

MAYOR

Tell that guy to go to hell.

VOICE (*continuing*)

He says, even if ya did get away, the way you wanted, ya ain't got a chance for more than a coupla hours. He says he's awfully disappointed in you, he says be sensible about it and—

MEARS

Hey, Bill.

VOICE

Yea. I'm listenin'.

MEARS

Tell him I said for him to go to hell! Got that? Now come on, git. Don't stall. Get out, before I plug ya.

VOICE

All right. Good-bye, Killer. Good luck to ya. I just wanna tell ya, there's about five hundred soldiers out here with machine-guns, and about a thousand armed civies—

MEARS

There are? Well tell 'em—*all* to go to hell!

VOICE

All right, Killer. Good luck to you.

MEARS (*exits cell*)

Watch him, men. If he tries anything—

D'AMORO

He ain't.

KIRBY

He knows better. He's an old convict.

O'CONNORS

Mears. You heard what the Warden said. He's asking you like a man, not to do this thing. He won't do anything, but what the state demands—

MEARS

Oh. He won't? Well, that's very nice of him. He's only gonna give me the electric chair. He's only gonna kill me. What do ya want me to do? Get down on my knees and thank him?

O'CONNORS

That's his job. His duty—

MEARS

All right. This is my duty. To show the world that I don't like it. To show the world that *I* object to it. Do ya think *I* wanna die? You think I ain't a human being? Ya think I don't wanna live? You think it's very nice to wait in that goddam cell, day after day, week after week, month after month, and see men die, one after another, see lights go dim, hear the whine of

that lousy motor, and wait, and wait, and wait and die a million times every goddam minute?

O'CONNORS

But, what did you start all this for? You have brains enough to know he will never let you through—even if you killed the whole force—

MEARS (*passionately*)

Because I wanna show them. I wanna show them what it means. To die. I want to show what a man, what men will go through, *not* to die. Do ya think these men here got any hopes of gettin' through? Do you? No. Do you think I got any? No! First we wanna show 'em, and second we wanna die like men, not like rats in a trap. That's why. Like men. (*Stops abruptly, and glances at his watch.*) It's ten-thirty-seven, Callahan. How does it feel? Do you think you understand a little bit of what we feel? Now?

CALLAHAN (*turning to O'CONNORS*)

Christ, Father. I've been working together with him for twenty years. Why, we're pals. I'm his own brother-in-law. He can't let me go this way. He can't. It's murder, Father. No. He wouldn't. What does it mean to him? A job. That's all. A job.

O'CONNORS

It's his duty, Frank.

CALLAHAN

Duty? (*Slowly.*) To hell with it!

O'CONNORS

If these men succeeded in obtaining their freedom, this way—

CALLAHAN (*angrily*)

Well, what the hell of it? Isn't it better to let four men free, than to have four of us killed? Isn't it better? They can catch them later on. These men are not going out to blow up the world. They just want to hide. They only want to get away. That's all. They only want to get away.

O'CONNORS

But, it's setting a precedent—it would destroy the morale. Prisons couldn't exist without morale, without—

CALLAHAN (*suddenly shouting*)

Who in hell cares for morale or precedents, when it means our lives—? Your life and my life!

O'CONNORS

No. They couldn't shoot me. A priest of God! No!

CALLAHAN

You don't think so? Well, ask him. Ask him. What are you afraid of? (*To MEARS*) Is O'Connors next to go, or isn't he?

MEARS (*nods*)

Sure, O'Connors, sure. I'm gonna give you a chance to meet that God you're always talking about. Sure. Whatsamatter? What are ya afraid of? You're a believer. There's another world. A Heaven. You're in

God's path, ain't ya? Christ. He died for you, for mankind. Can't you die—?

WERNER (*reciting wildly*)

I fight alone, and win or sink,
I need no one to make me free,
I want no Jesus Christ to think
That he could ever die for me!
Hol———mes!

HARRIS (*insanely*)

Don't let them kill me. Mears. Mears.
[O'CONNORS *stares dully* at MEARS.]

MEARS

Callahan—you got three minutes to live. Three minutes. They stopped firing to see what we'll do. The whole world is waitin' to see if we got the nerve to kill you. If we got the nerve to kill the P. K. of a prison and a priest of God. Huh. We'll show 'em.

D'AMORO (*with fire*)

Show 'em.

MAYOR

We'll show them that being murdered is not so nice.

CALLAHAN

Listen—Mears—I want you to know—

MEARS

How do you feel, now? How many times did you read a death-warrant? How many times did you give the

electrician the death-signal? Eh? How many guys did you hold a hose to, or, laced up in a strait-jacket, eh?

CALLAHAN (*pleading intensely*)

Mears. Men. Listen to me. For Christ's sake, I only worked here. I didn't put you here—

MEARS (*fiercely*)

Why the hell did you have to work here?

MAYOR (*sneering*)

What would you like to have for your supper, Keeper? Nothing will be refused you that's reasonable.

D'AMORO

Who would you like to have for your witnesses?

CALLAHAN

Stop! Stop! For God's sake. He can't. Stan. I'm the father of her children—

MAYOR (*screaming*)

And I'm a father, too. I've never even seen my kid.

MEARS (*gradually rising to a crescendo of intensity*)

The whole world's against us. We're like animals, in a jungle. They hunt us down, they kill us. They don't give us a chance. They don't try to find out what's the matter with us. Why we are—like we are. No. They cage us up—. (*Stops suddenly.*) You got two minutes—Callahan. Say your prayers. (*CALLAHAN stands stock-still.*) Yeah. You cage us up like monkeys—and you want these monkeys to become men—

to act like men. I—I want to live. I want to be free. I want to see an ocean. I want to walk in the sun. I want to lay with a woman—you—you— (*Something chokes him in the throat—he stops.*) One minute, Callahan. Do you feel your guts turnin' over like I have; like all these monkeys have?

WERNER

Hol———mes!

CALLAHAN (*with an effort at composure*)

All right, Mears. Where do I stand?

MEARS (*looking at watch*)

Right where you are.

[*Shoots. CALLAHAN falls. O'CONNORS intones.*

KIRBY (*with a deep breath*)

Well—it looks like we played our ace. (*Pause.*) What next, Mears?

O'CONNORS

I suppose—I'm next.

MEARS

You are, O'Connors.

D'AMORO (*suddenly*)

No. You can't do that. You can't shoot a priest. That'll be a lousy trick.

MEARS

Shut up.

D'AMORO (*screaming*)

Who the hell do you think you are? Goddam it.

You've been bossing this thing long enough. You can go screw. You're a goddam bastard if you shoot a priest. I'm through. We're done, goddam you, done. [MEARS *hits him in the stomach with his left hand*, D'AMORO *falls to floor*.

MEARS

Keep your shirt on, Wop, this is no time to get chicken-hearted. We'll throw him out of the window the same as we did Drake. All right, lift him up. Look out for snipers. Let them get him away.

[*They throw CALLAHAN out of window from Cell Seven.*]

HARRIS

Mears, don't let them. I won't. Don't let them kill me, Mears, you mustn't.

MEARS

They say it's bad luck to kill a priest, O'Connors. I wanta see if it is. I guess you know the prayers all right.

MAYOR (*from window*)

Okay, Killer, they're coming to get it.

MEARS

Tell them that O'Connors is next at (*Glancing at watch.*) eleven-thirty sharp. We're playin' every card.

D'AMORO (*on the floor, holding his belly, pleading*)

Say, Boss. Don't do it. Will you please? I ain't said nothing about the others, but don't kill a priest—

MAYOR

Maybe we oughtn't, Killer? Maybe it ain't right—?

D'AMORO

No—it ain't that. Christ knows, I don't think much of such things—but when I was a kid—my family was awful strict with me about church, confession—you know what I mean.

KIRBY (*at the window*)

They're here. Shall I tell them to wait Mears?

MEARS

Yea. Wait.

KIRBY (*to outside*)

Hold on there. We'll give you a message.

MEARS (*pause, to D'AMORO*)

Well, get the hell on that window. I don't need you to tell me what to do. (D'AMORO *goes to cell.*) Mayor—we're not killing him—but tell them anyway. Maybe it will work.

D'AMORO (*from the window*)

Okay, Boss.

MAYOR (*at the window, to the outside*)

Tell the Warden the priest is next at eleven-thirty.
[*Report of shot. He is hit by a bullet. He gurgles a few words.*]

KIRBY

Duck!

[MAYOR *falls*.]

MAYOR

Jesus—Jesus—

KIRBY (*by his side*)

Christ—Mayor—Mayor—

MEARS (*rushing to cell*)

What is it—what's happened? (*Grasps situation.*)
Oh—!

KIRBY

They got him—

MEARS

Freddie—Freddie—he ain't gone yet—here pick him up—on the bed—easy—easy. How did it happen—?

KIRBY

He was waving the truce—

MEARS

Goddam 'em. He ought to come around in a minute—gimme some water— (*To D'AMORO who is looking in cell.*) Stay on that window—.

HARRIS (*at the cell door with PEDDIE*)

What happened?

PEDDIE

It's the kid—they got him—

HARRIS

But not me. Not—

[PEDDIE *puts his hand on HARRIS' mouth.*]

MAYOR (*coming to*)

Elaine—Elaine—Mears—

MEARS

Here I am, kid—right here—

MAYOR

Mears, don't let 'em get me—Mears—.

MEARS

I won't, Freddie, keep holding on—.

MAYOR

It's you—?

MEARS

Right here, kid—take it easy—

MAYOR

They got me, ain't it funny they should get me now—
they were wavin' a truce—I didn't think they'd
shoot—

MEARS

I know—it was a lousy trick —.

MAYOR

It hurts terrible—my chest—awfully terrible—

MEARS

Maybe you better not talk.

MAYOR

You go back—keep watch—I can get along.

[*After an interval, MEARS appears, passes PRIEST who
is looking in cell and stands near green door.*]

O'CONNORS

Can I help him—?

MEARS

He don't need your prayers—

O'CONNORS

I know something of surgery. I may be able to relieve him—

[MEARS *unlocks handcuffs*—PRIEST *goes into cell*.
MEARS *sits on stool left*. O'CONNORS *enters cell*.]

MAYOR

Who is it—?

O'CONNORS

Father O'Connors—

MAYOR

You can get the hell out—I don't need you—

O'CONNORS

I'm sorry, Mayor—I only want to help—

MAYOR

I don't need your prayers— Get the hell out.

O'CONNORS (*with sincerity*)

I'm not going to pray—I want to help you—I want to ease your pain—I can, I think—if you'll let me—

MAYOR (*weakly*)

Christ—I wish you could do that—I wish somebody could—

WERNER

Hol———mes!

KIRBY (*from the window excitedly—loudly*)

Killer—c'mere, quick. Here's a guy comin'. He's carryin' somethin'. A box or— Looks to me like—

D'AMORO (*who has rushed to see*)

There's another guy, a little behind him. Sneakin' along—carrying—a roll of wire—

MEARS

Why—? Box? (*Then shouting.*) That's dynamite—damn them. Shoot 'em. Shoot 'em down.

[*He rushes to the window of Cell Five.*]

MAYOR

What is it? What happened—what is it?

KIRBY (*after he and D'AMORO have fired*)

Missed. Goddam. They're still coming, Mears.

MEARS

Get 'em!

D'AMORO

They're right under the window now.

MEARS

Get 'em!

KIRBY

They're runnin' back— They planted it—

MEARS (*rushing out of his cell and into theirs. He shoves KIRBY aside. Yelling*)

Where? Get the hell out of my way. Let me get at them.

[*He shoots twice, looks out, then walks out into the*]

corridor. Now back at MAYOR'S side. He is on one knee examining MAYOR.

D'AMORO

You got 'em Killer. You got 'em both. In two shots.

MEARS (*Exits cell into corridor*)

All right—get away from those windows. Come out here. Hurry up. (*Men exit cells.*) Now, when that blast comes. (*Suddenly, fiercely.*) Say get the kid out—for Christ's sake—

O'CONNORS

All right,—I'll do—

[A sudden white and red flash followed by the dull boom of the blast of dynamite. The lights go out. A little moonlight, and the search-lights coming through the cell-windows furnish the only light. Following the boom, the noise of plaster falling and a few panes of breaking glass. Machine-gun bursts follow up the playing of the search-lights on the windows.]

MEARS

Everybody all right? Nobody hurt?

O'CONNORS

We're all right.

MEARS

That blast musta broken the wires—(*As he peers into cell occupied by PEDDIE and HARRIS.*) You guys still kicking, eh?—Too bad.

WERNER

Hol——mes!

MEARS (*to WERNER*)

It doesn't mean a hell of a lot to you, Eddie—one way or the other—does it?

[*The PRIEST emerges from the cell looks at MEARS and walks to the green door—MEARS makes a step, when he is stopped by MAYOR's voice.*

MAYOR

O God, why don't it stop?

[*MEARS looks for a moment, then advances to the PRIEST.*

MEARS

Well—?

O'CONNORS (*quietly*)

I know how you feel, Mears, but you've got to listen to me.

MEARS

I'm listening.

O'CONNORS

You can relieve that boy of his torture—

MEARS

You mean—give up?

O'CONNORS

Give up and get him to the hospital—medical attention—he needs it.

MEARS (*deliberately*)

No.

O'CONNORS

He'll go mad with pain— He's in hell in there; you like him, Mears—for his sake.

MEARS

No. He took his chances.

O'CONNORS

There are no chances any more—you know that.

MEARS

What'll it amount to?—They'll cure him—sure—they'll get him good and healthy—so they can kill him again!

O'CONNORS

All right—Mears.

[MEARS *turns—walks to right-stage, pauses, goes back and enters the cell where MAYOR is. There is silence for a moment, then MAYOR speaks.*

MAYOR

Who is it?

MEARS

It's me, Freddie—

MAYOR

Oh—

MEARS

Did I wake you?

MAYOR

No—I just had my eyes closed—I wish I could sleep—

MEARS

No let up?

MAYOR

Not much. How do we stand?

MEARS

O.K.

MAYOR

Funny—they getting me—after all. (*There is a long pause—then MAYOR losing all his control and resistance.*) It's no use! It's no use! I can't keep it up—I can't keep it up—God—God—it hurts—it hurts like hell—I can't stand it—Jesus—Mears, I can't stand it—

MEARS

Hold on, kid—stay with 'em!

MAYOR

I'm trying to, I am—I'm trying to—

MEARS (*he speaks quickly and sharply.*)

Listen to me, Freddie—I want you to listen to me—
can you listen?

MAYOR

Yes—

MEARS

I'm gonna get you a doctor—put you in a hospital—
—do you understand?

MAYOR (*quietly*)

What do you mean— (*After a pause.*) give up?

MEARS

Yea.

MAYOR (*simply*)

You're crazy. It ain't fair.

MEARS

We're pretty near licked anyway, Freddie.

MAYOR

It won't do no good—I'm going out like a light—

MEARS

O'Connors says not for a long time, Freddie—it'll be hard—

MAYOR (*with intensity*)

You don't understand—I couldn't go through it again—waiting—waiting. I won't. I won't, I tell you. Mears, I won't go through it again.

MEARS (*softly*)

Well—.

MAYOR (*deliberately*)

I—want—you to finish it. You will—you've got to finish it— (*After a pause.*) My eyes are closed—and I'm thinking of Elaine—Elaine and the kid—I think I know what it looks like—I'm thinking of 'em both—

[*There is a muffled shot—and silence. After an interval, MEARS emerges from the cell.*]

WERNER (*quietly*)

Hol———mes!

MEARS (*standing in door of Cell Seven, a slight pause, then*)

Christ, do you think I wanted to do that? Well, what the hell are you waiting for? Get on those windows. We haven't given up yet.

KIRBY

What's the use? There's only two bullets now.

MEARS

Yea. That's right. I'd forgotten.

KIRBY (*pause*)

Well—?

MEARS (*looking him straight in the eye*)

Well—what?

KIRBY

Well—maybe—we oughta wave a shirt.

MEARS (*snapping*)

What for?

KIRBY

Well— (*Then blurting it out.*) We're through, ain't we? We're all through.

MEARS (*repeating mechanically*)

Through.

KIRBY (*more confidently*)

You don't think we got a chance this way?

[*No answer.*]

But, if we pack in right now while there's still time, we're all right, maybe. Let's figure it out reasonable. It pays sometime to figure a thing out before.

MEARS (*half-listening, thinking of something*)

Yea.

KIRBY (*quickly, earnestly*)

Well, look. They can't give us more than the chair on our original sentence. See? Because this noise will have to be settled first, and somebody's gotta be responsible. Ya see that, don't ya? Now, look, there's gotta be, first, the indictment, then the trial and investigation, and then the conviction, and all the regular red tape. Now that takes time. Plenty. And you can't tell. Why we might even get a chance on insanity. Christ. That's an idea. Sure. Think of that.

MEARS (*slowly*)

That's the toughest, hard-boiled mob in the world out there. Prison guards and state troopers. We hate them. Well, they hate us. I'm telling you. They're just waiting to let scream at us a thousand machine guns.

KIRBY

But—with our hands up—?

MEARS

They—hate—our—guts.

KIRBY (*after a pause, slowly*)

Then we're through?

MEARS (*echoes him*)

Through—.

D'AMORO

Whata you goin' do, Killer?

[There is an outburst of machine-gun fire.]

WERNER (*commences to recite wildly, between bursts*)

Cannon to the right of them

Cannon to the left of them,

Cannon in front of them,

Volleyed and thundered.

KIRBY

I know that poem. I can remember it when I was a kid in school.

MEARS

I used to know it too.

WERNER (*between bursts of machine-gun fire*)

Flashed all their sabres bare.

Flashed as they turned in air,

Sabr'ing the gunners there,

All the world wondered—

MEARS (*excitedly*)

Eddie, that's a good poem! That's a damn good poem! Eddie, you're right. (*Stands.*) Let 'em wonder out there. Let all the world wonder. *Let the whole goddam world wonder!*

[Walks slowly across stage, takes KIRBY's hand, places gun with remaining two bullets, in it, then crosses and opens door right, then turns slowly.]

MEARS

I'm goin' out into the open air.

[Exits slowly, searchlight slowly moves from right to

left, door slam off right, searchlight swings around left to right, burst of machine guns, PRIEST intones Latin. The two remaining convicts stand, motionless, transfixed, staring at each other.

WERNER (*idiotically*)

Hol——mes !

CURTAIN

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